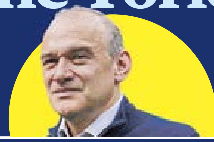


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Tory MPs tell Braverman: quit the PM pitch and stick to the day job

Home secretary accused of undermining Sunak in speech on migration

Pippa Crerar
Peter Walker

Suella Braverman was accused by despairing Conservative MPs of undermining Rishi Sunak's authority and making a bid for the future leadership of the party yesterday after a partisan speech railing against experts and elites.

The home secretary delivered a highly personal blueprint for a political philosophy to take on the "radical left", in what was interpreted as a pitch to be the right's next candidate made at a National Conservatism conference in London.

Senior Tory MPs privately condemned the overture to become the party's leader should the Tories lose the next election. One told the Guardian: "Rishi needs to make it clear to her that she is either a team player or a backbencher."

In an attempt to reclaim the right wing of his party, the prime minister will today urge European leaders to crack down on immigration through tighter policing of its borders, after his surprise meeting with Ukraine's president yesterday was overshadowed by Braverman's rhetoric.

Tory MPs have grown increasingly uneasy since the huge local election losses and ministers are braced for a record increase in immigration figures next week, which threaten to undermine pledges to reduce the number of arrivals.

Sunak has also faced criticism from the pro-Brexit right of his party since it was announced that just 600 of the 4,000 EU laws he pledged to revoke by the end of the year would be scrapped.

Conservative MPs were invited for drinks with the prime minister in the Downing Street garden to mark the coronation last night. He was expected to try to calm nerves and draw a line under any potential mutiny.

However, multiple MPs suggested Sunak should warn Braverman to stick to her role as home secretary by getting to grips with problems in the migration system, rather than giving her permission to undermine his leadership.

One minister said: "She's not waiting for the election but is pitching for prime minister now. And she's not the only one. Being in the cabinet is no longer a collective endeavour but a position to pitch for the next job. It would be better if she and others focused on the jobs they actually had. You would think being home secretary was some side hustle."

Another MP described her speech as outrageous, adding: "It was rather rich that she was highlighting the problems with our immigration system when she's been in charge of it for the past nine months. It was all about her ambitions, not about improving things."

A third MP said the majority of Tory colleagues were "rolling their eyes" at Braverman's "unhelpful" appearance at the conference.

"She's doing it because she wants an audience ... 8 →



The Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, met Rishi Sunak at the UK prime minister's country house, Chequers, yesterday, as part of a European tour aimed at securing weapons, including warplanes, for a counteroffensive against Russia. **News** *Pages 8-9* →

PHOTOGRAPH: SIMON DAWSON/DOWNING STREET/EPA

ASA to ban ads making unproved eco claims

Patrick Greenfield
Jillian Ambrose
Ellen Ormesher

Adverts that claim products are carbon neutral using offsets are to be banned by the UK's advertising watchdog unless companies can prove they really work, the Guardian can reveal, as Gucci becomes the latest company to struggle with a high-profile environmental commitment based on offsetting.

Amid growing concern that firms are misleading consumers about the environmental impact of their products, the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) is to begin stricter enforcement over the use of terms such as "carbon 12 →

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News

Osborne gains another job as he is hired to lead new $3bn investment company

Kalyeena Makortoff



▲ *The ex-chancellor George Osborne already holds a number of City jobs*

George Osborne has been hired to lead a new $3bn (£2.4bn) investment management firm, adding to a growing roster of lucrative jobs the former chancellor has taken up since stepping down as an MP in 2017.

Osborne, who led the Treasury under David Cameron from 2010 to 2016, has been appointed chair of Lingotto Investment Management, which is owned by the billionaire Agnelli family's Exor group.

Exor manages the Italian family's investments in an array of companies, including Juventus FC, the Economist and Ferrari, and is run by the Agnelli heir, John Elkann.

Lingotto markets itself as "an independent, entrepreneurial" firm that allows staff to pursue their "passion for investing without the bureaucracy of most large organisations, or the loneliness of standalone funds".

Osborne already holds a number of City roles, including a partnership he took up in 2021 at the boutique City advisory firm Robey Warshaw. Last year he was one of four partners there who shared a £26.5m payout.

He will also remain a director for his family's wallpaper-making business, Osborne & Little. The company disclosed last year that it had increased pay for directors, including the former chancellor, by 30% after a jump in profits that was helped by £700,000 in British and US government grants.

Osborne will also stay on as chair of the British Museum and managing partner of the venture capital firm 9Yards Capital, which he founded with his younger brother, Theo. The firm has invested in startups including the US-based cryptocurrency exchange Coinbase and Robinhood, a trading platform that gained notoriety for allowing amateur stock investors to play the market.

Osborne had an even more wide-ranging portfolio career before he joined Robey Warshaw two years ago – when he said goodbye to a big annual paycheque from BlackRock, which paid him £650,000 for working one day a week as an adviser.

Previous posts also included editorship of the Evening Standard and chairmanship of the Northern Powerhouse Partnership.

His new role is not unexpected, as he had chaired Exor's business advisory council for the past five years. Lingotto – which is not disclosing Osborne's salary – said the former chancellor would run the investment management firm, but would "use his extensive professional experience in support of the company's development".

"I'm delighted to be joining the team here, which offers something new and unique in the investment management space," Osborne said. "It's been a privilege to chair the Exor partners' council since 2018 and I now look forward to working with the Lingotto team, helping them to build a great company."

Lingotto also announced it had hired a former Baillie Gifford partner, James Anderson, to its investor team. Anderson stepped down last year from Baillie Gifford, where he helped to produce returns of 1,155% for his actively managed fund between 2000 and 2022.

One in five will pay 40% tax rate by 2027, says thinktank

Larry Elliott
Economics editor



◀ *In the early 1990s only 5%-6% of teachers paid higher-rate tax, but by 2027 it will be one in four, says the IFS*
PHOTOGRAPH: ANDREW FOX/ALAMY

One in four teachers and one in eight nurses will pay higher-rate tax by 2027 as a result of the government's freeze on allowances and thresholds, according to a leading thinktank.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) said better-paid public sector workers would be among the almost 8 million people – one in five taxpayers – who would pay income tax at 40% or above as result of the Treasury's attempt to reduce the budget deficit.

The IFS said an additional 2.5 million people would no longer be basic-rate taxpayers by the time the six-year freeze on allowances and thresholds came to an end in 2027-28.

It said the decision not to uprate allowances and thresholds was adding to the financial pressures on workers whose wages were failing to keep pace with inflation.

The chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, has said action is needed to repair the damage to the public finances caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, but the IFS report is likely to lead to fresh calls from some Conservative MPs for taxes to be cut. The Office for Budget Responsibility, the independent body that makes economic forecasts for the government, has said taxes as a share of national income are on course to be their highest in 70 years.

Isaac Delestre, a research economist at the IFS, said: "The story of the last 30 years has been one of higher-rate tax going from being something reserved for the very richest to something that a much larger proportion of adults can expect to encounter."

The report said that in the early 1990s no nurses and only 5%-6% of machinists, electricians and teachers paid higher-rate income tax. By 2027-28, more than one in eight nurses, one in six machinists, one in five electricians and one in four teachers would be higher-rate taxpayers.

The IFS said that in 1991-92, 3.5% of UK adults (1.6 million) paid the 40% higher rate of income tax. By 2022-23 that had risen to 11% (6.1 million), and the figure would reach 14% (7.8 million) by 2027-28.

Of the 14%, 3.1% of adults (1.7 million) will face marginal tax rates of either 45% or 60% – almost as large a share as paid the 40% higher rate at the start of the 1990s.

Delestre said there had been "a fundamental and profound change" to the income tax system.

"The freeze to thresholds is supercharging that process, pulling an additional 2.5 million people into paying rates of 40% or more by 2027-28," he added.

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Aditya Chakrabortty
Columnist



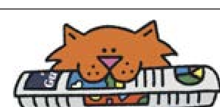
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▼ *Vernon Kay, pictured with his wife Tess Daly, below, began his new regime in Radio 2's mid-morning slot yesterday* PHOTOGRAPH: BBC



Radio review Kay does it his way but leans heavily on the oldies to fade out Bruce era

Vernon Kay on Radio 2
★★★★☆

Mark Lawson

There was one extra sung syllable in the name jingle – "Ver-non Kay!" instead of "Ken Bruce!" – but the new host, stepping in after his predecessor's 31-year reign, seemed keen to reassure Bruce fans that the new regime would not be too revolutionary.

After variously exclaiming: "Right, here we go! The adventure! Let it begin! Let's do this!" the first two tracks were U2's hit Beautiful Day and Chic's Good Times, both of which he called "absolute classics", possibly seeing off the social media fear-smear from Bruce devotees that the new man would fill the show with the sort of grungy stuff 49-year-olds like Kay are into.

The biggest new feature – Vernon's Vault, featuring selections from the BBC archive – is also decidedly retro, even leading to a rare Radio 2 airing these days for Frank Sinatra, whose death exactly 25 years ago this week was one of the things Kay vaulted. Remarkably, a later track was 70 years old: Doris Day's Secret Love from 1953, played for Kay's mum's birthday. Kay will have a limited number of older relatives to leaven the records in this way, but "producer Phil" was trying to throw any Radio 2 veterans who tuned in to post fingers-in-ears emojis as the vaporwave and witch house tracks banged out.

The first guest on Tracks of My Years (a Bruce-era holdover) – Suggs from Madness – began his career when Kay was two. Such a slick anecdotalist was another reassurance to wavering listeners and Suggs' first selection gave a second play of the day for Sinatra, with his 1961 recording of a 1937 song, A Foggy Day in London Town. That provided BBC balance to Kay's opening mission statement: "We're not going to be London-centric: this show is about you!" which risked confusing listeners in London.



Between Kay's early tunes, there were also motivational voicenotes from new airwave mates Zoe Ball, Scott Mills and Jo Whiley. Kay mentioned that he had worked with them at "t'other place" – code that perhaps acknowledged complaints from older listeners about Radio 1 being recreated on Radio 2.

At 10am, Kay could have done anything, while the nation's media corps watched ITV's This Morning to see if Phillip Schofield and Holly Willoughby, co-stars reported to be on Gallagher-brothers-like terms, would agree to share their sofa. (They did, choreographed to sit closer and gaze into each other's eyes like a dating app advert.)

As Bruce opened his Greatest Hits Radio show with Blondie's 1979 single Heart of Glass, Kay went with something younger: Abba's Lay All Your Love on Me, from 1980. Throughout the second hour, Kay, texters, contestants and weathercasters and sportscasters kept telling each other they were "smashing it". Touchingly, Kay was still nervous enough to answer his own cry of: "How good is that?" with: "Brilliant!" Producer Phil needs to find him a better 10.30am quiz. Ten to the Top, a pop trivia quiz, is, compared with PopMaster (which Bruce took with him), like listening to Blue after the Beatles.

Audibly relaxing in the final stretch, Kay made two minor slips, suggesting that he listens to Greg James's Radio 1 breakfast show (the bosses will get him on Ball) and giving Bruce supporters one of their few victories of the morning, when he yelped embarrassingly over one intro: "Check out the slap bass on that. That was fu-un-kee!"

But true to what seemed a classic-rich playlist strategy, he finished the first show with the Rolling Stones' Satisfaction, from 1965, nine years before his birth; he would be justified for feeling the emotion that Mick Jagger hymned.

Kay had described following Bruce as equivalent to taking over from Sir Alex Ferguson at Manchester United. Ferguson's replacement, David Moyes, won his first league game 4-1 (Kay came out at least 2-1 up), but failed to complete the first year of his contract. In music radio, as in football, the trick is relentless consistency – which is the DJ's next post-Bruce challenge.

Center Parcs for sale as owners aim to cash in on home holidays

Sarah Butler

Center Parcs' UK and Irish business is being put up for sale with a price tag of up to £5bn – double the amount it was bought for in 2015 – as its private equity owners seek to cash in on a trend for domestic breaks kickstarted by the Covid pandemic.

The potential sale comes after the group – whose five resorts in the UK and one in Ireland are known for their tropical-themed indoor pools, spas and activities for children, and for their sometimes eye-watering fees – bounced back to a profit after being forced to close outlets under pandemic restrictions.

Sales more than quadrupled to £503m in the year to 21 April 2022, helping lift profits to £66m, from a loss of £157m the previous year. The shift came as visitors sought out holidays close to home while global travel was disrupted. The group had hoped to build a new site in Worth Forest, West Sussex, but pulled out this year after an outcry from wildlife campaigners.

Private equity has piled into the UK's domestic holiday market amid hopes for growth prompted by the falling value of the pound, the cost of living crisis, environmental concerns and a growing interest in outdoor pursuits during the pandemic.

Bourne Leisure, which includes the caravan park operator Haven Holidays, was bought by the private equity group Blackstone for about £3bn in January 2021. The same year CVC Capital Partners bought Away Resorts for £250m and then bought up Aria Resorts and Coppergreen Leisure to combine with it.

Advisers to Brookfield Property Partners have been sounding out potential buyers for Center Parcs over the past week, according to the Financial Times, which first reported the sale move, with possible suitors expected to include other private equity firms.



▲ *Center Parcs opened its first UK site in Sherwood Forest in 1987*

Center Parcs has been operating in the UK since 1987 when it opened a site in Sherwood Forest, Nottinghamshire. But its roots go back to 1967, when a Dutch businessman opened a holiday village at De Lommerbergen, with tented accommodation.

The business gradually shifted from canvas to lodges and was renamed Center Parcs before the UK arm was split off from the European division in 2001. Center Parcs continues to operate in Germany, the Netherlands, France and Belgium under separate ownership.

Erdoğan defies polls as election goes to runoff

Ruth Michaelson *Istanbul*
Jon Henley

Turkey's presidential election is going to a runoff after Recep Tayyip Erdoğan comfortably defeated his chief rival, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, but just failed to clear the 50% vote threshold needed to avoid a second round.

The 69-year-old conservative incumbent confounded predictions and his secular rival to win the first round of the pivotal election, scoring 49.51% against Kılıçdaroğlu's 44.88% with a small number of overseas votes left to count. The runoff will take place on 28 May.

Polls had predicted an advantage if not an outright victory for Kılıçdaroğlu, 74, but as the final results from Sunday's election were announced it became clear Erdoğan had defied expectations, seizing a majority in parliament - along with his nationalist coalition partners - and forcing a second-round vote.

As the opposition scrambled to process a long and difficult evening in which they repeatedly claimed to be in the lead, the six-party coalition that had banded together in the hope of defeating Erdoğan appeared ready to fracture.

Kılıçdaroğlu in particular remains under pressure to adapt quickly to a nationalist groundswell of support signalling a further rightward shift in Turkey's politics, granting the ultranationalist presidential candidate Sinan Oğan 5% of the overall vote and empowering far-right parties in parliament.

A voting observation mission by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe said political participation was high and voters had a choice between true alternatives, "but the incumbent president and the ruling parties enjoyed an unjustified advantage, including through biased media coverage".

They added: "The campaign itself was competitive and largely free for most contestants but characterised by intense polarisation, and marred by harsh rhetoric, instances of misuse of administrative resources, and the pressure and intimidation faced by one opposition party."

Kılıçdaroğlu tried to appear defiant, releasing a short video that showed him banging on a table and declaring: "Here I am! Here I am! You're here too. I swear to God I will fight till the end." Investors appeared less convinced, with the main stock exchange index down 2.5% after initially falling more than 6%.







▲ *Top, marchers carry a banner depicting Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, the main rival of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in the presidential race; above, Erdoğan and his wife, Emine, greet crowds; right, Sinan Oğan and his wife, Gökçen*
PHOTOGRAPHS: SEDAT SUNA/EPA; AYTAC UNAL/ANADOLU AGENCY/GETTY

The opposition had expected to benefit from voter anger at Turkey's economic crisis, after Erdoğan's unorthodox policy of low interest rates sent the lira plunging and inflation soaring to hit 85% last year.

A slow government response to earthquakes that killed more than 50,000 people across Turkey and Syria in February had also been expected to sway voters. But Erdoğan successfully rallied conservative support and is thought likely to extend his rule into a third decade.

The main opposition Republican People's party (CHP) attempted to save face despite unexpectedly falling behind in both the parliamentary and presidential votes. "The elections held yesterday showed that Erdoğan could not get a vote of confidence from our nation," said a CHP spokesperson, Faik Öztrak.

"For the next 15 days, we will do everything to bring rights, law and justice to this country. The will of our nation is above everything else. We will definitely win in the second round … The winner will be democracy, the winner will be Turkey."

Amid questions about why Kılıçdaroğlu and his coalition did not manage to secure a majority or capitalise on voters' criticisms of Erdoğan, observers noted a rightward shift in Turkish politics.

"During the campaign period there was a lot of speculation about an opposition undercurrent that might push Kılıçdaroğlu above the 50% mark in the first round. We now know that the colour of this undercurrent was conservative and nationalist. Very few opinion polls had captured that," said Berkay Mandıracı, from the International Crisis Group.

Kılıçdaroğlu's six-party opposition coalition largely fell silent the day after the vote as they struggled to regroup.

"Today a deep sense of defeat and disappointment prevails among opposition voters. Mobilising them again will be a challenge for Kılıçdaroğlu and his alliance partners," said Mandıracı. "For now at least the momentum appears to be in Erdoğan's favour."

Battle for power in Ankara
Key questions before the second-round vote

Why is the election so important?
The elections are crucial to the future of Turkey's battered economy, but also as a marker of the state of politics in an era of strongman leaders in fragile democracies around the world. The vote was seen as a last chance to stop Recep Tayyip Erdoğan turning the country into a full-blown autocracy.

Why was it close?
While Erdoğan's grip on the levers of power has brought Turkey close to autocracy, he has made serious economic missteps recently. He has increased his control of the theoretically independent central bank and steadfastly refused to increase interest rates despite inflation that officially touched 80% last year and which independent analysts say could, in reality, have surpassed 100%. Turkish people are far poorer and more uncertain of their futures as a result. The government response to the recent earthquake was widely viewed as inadequate.

However, he has outperformed expectations and appears to be further ahead than predicted.

Who is Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu?
Kılıçdaroğlu, a dour former accountant and bureaucrat and the longtime head of the Republican People's party (CHP), was not a universally popular choice among the opposition to stand. A social democrat, he is at the head of a coalition that includes nationalists who are only supporting him because of their desperation to unseat Erdoğan. He has promised to stand down after a single term after instituting more conventional economic policies and restoring full parliamentary democracy.

Was the election fair?
The speed of the count, and how that information has been put out to the public, has been contested. The opposition claims ballot boxes were withheld in areas where it had majorities, and that the count was weighted to give figures for areas that support Erdoğan and the AKP first, and then slow-walking and contesting the opposition's count.

While Turkey is not a dictatorship, Erdoğan is said to have influence over the election authorities. He has disbursed incentives to voters to back him again, raising government workers' pay by 45% before the election, reducing electricity prices, and giving people a free month of natural gas. Meanwhile the Turkish media, largely controlled by his allies, has given him much more airtime than Kılıçdaroğlu: one study found that in April he got 32 hours on state radio and TV against 32 minutes for his rival.

32
Hours devoted to Erdoğan on state media in April, according to one study; Kılıçdaroğlu got 32 minutes

How will the runoff go?
Erdoğan clearly has the advantage. But the question of which side is able to successfully spin a story about its own electoral success will be central to the runoff.

One question is where the votes for the ultranationalist third-place candidate, Sinan Oğan, will go. It's possible his voters would accept Kılıçdaroğlu because there are nationalists in his coalition.

But that leaves Kılıçdaroğlu in a bind as his campaign has been leaning left to get support from the Kurds - which infuriates the nationalists.

He has defended the rights of the marginalised Kurdish minority, even as Erdoğan has sought to tie him to an insurgency waged by Kurdish militants. Now Kılıçdaroğlu needs to lean right, and in practice that probably means disavowing the Kurds - even though they have feted and welcomed him.
Archie Bland and Ruth Michaelson

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It's not a sin, says Pet Shop Boys founder
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Review: China's Hidden Century
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Call to scrap VAT on sun protection products to help prevent skin cancer

Rachel Hall

The high cost of sunscreen is resulting in more skin cancer cases, according to a charity that is calling on the government to scrap VAT on protective creams.

Melanoma skin cancer is on the rise and 4,000 cases annually are linked to poverty, according to the Melanoma Focus charity, which argues that a VAT cut would reduce the number of deaths.

Susanna Daniels, the charity's CEO, said: "The government could help make skin protection more accessible to all, regardless of income level, by removing VAT from high-factor sunscreens. This would be a cost-effective way to cut the overall incidence of skin cancer."

The move would bring the UK's policies closer to that of Australia, where sunscreen is subsidised.

Melanoma is the fifth most common cancer in the UK and the deadliest form of skin cancer – yet 86% of melanomas are preventable.

Melanoma Focus surveyed 2,003 adults and found that half thought sunscreen was too expensive, while 10% said they did not use it because of the cost, and two-thirds said they would use more if it were 20% cheaper.

The survey also found most people (58%) did not know the signs of melanoma skin cancer, which include a mole that has changed shape or colour, or looks and feels unusual, as well as skin with a sore that does not heal within four weeks, or has visible lumps, or hurts, itches, bleeds or scabs over.

There are about 2,300 melanoma skin cancer deaths in the UK every year, with the number projected to rise. Cancer Research UK has forecast that there could be about 26,500 new cases of melanoma skin cancer every year in the UK by 2038, up from 16,700. One in 36 men and one in 47 women in the UK will be diagnosed in their lifetime.

Michelle Richardson, 49, from Hampshire, was diagnosed with melanoma in 2018 after spotting an itchy mole on her back, which was then removed. She had 18 months of clear scans, then felt a lump on her pelvis. "By the next day I had seven lumps and within a week I was no longer able to eat or walk and breathing was very difficult. A scan found the melanoma had spread throughout my body including in my spine, lungs, spleen and brain. I had stage 4 incurable melanoma and my life as I knew it changed forever," she said.



4,000
Number of melanoma skin cancer cases a charity says may be linked to poverty each year in the UK

"I was utterly terrified and felt so guilty about the thought of leaving my 10-year-old daughter without a mum. I had immunotherapy treatment for two years and I'm currently in remission, and hope it stays that way for as long as possible."

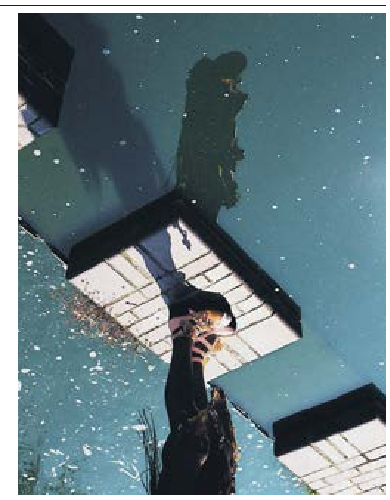
Amy Callaghan, the MP for East Dunbartonshire and a former member of the health and social care committee, backed the call to remove VAT from sunscreen. "When 52% of people in my constituency can't afford to turn on the heating, it's unlikely they'll take on extra expenses like sunscreen," she said.

Claire Knight of Cancer Research UK said the cheapest way to protect yourself was to stay in the shade and cover up, but added: "It's worth remembering you don't need to spend a lot on a sunscreen to get good protection – what matters is an SPF of at least 15, and a star rating of 4 or 5."

An HM Treasury spokesperson said: "We recognise the impact that rising prices are having at home, which is why we are providing significant support worth, on average, £3,300 per household."







Taking flight Images from the series Bird by Cieran Jay Forster, student at the London College of Communication and winner of the Photo London x Hahnemühle Student award. The works were praised for 'distilling scenes to their core'.

Too good to refuse? Bin crews latest to test out four-day week

Robert Booth
Social affairs correspondent

Bin lorry crews could soon be putting their feet up on a Monday as the UK's wave of four-day-week trials finally reaches frontline public services.

South Cambridgeshire district council is to test a 32-hour working week for 150 refuse loaders and drivers this summer after successful trials with white collar staff. Workers who investigate fly-tipping, undertake dredging and who caretake at council buildings will also join in.

Pay will remain the same and the council has said households will receive the same or better service. It is hoped that the city council, with which the district council shares waste services, will agree to the plan.

The change could cost £339,000 extra over two years, according to council papers, with more staff and new lorries required. Savings are expected from the use of fewer agency staff as the occupation becomes more appealing.

Joe Ryle, the director of the 4 Day Week Campaign, which has helped steer private sector trials, said: "We have always said the four-day week must apply for everyone, so it is brilliant the first ever trial for blue collar workers in the public sector has been approved. It's only fair that public sector workers and those in non-office jobs benefit too."

The decision follows the world's largest trial of a four-day week in the UK, which resulted in 56 of the 61 companies taking part carrying on with the test, with 18 making the arrangement permanent.

Companies involved ranged from the Charity Bank in Kent to Rivelin Robotics in Sheffield. Among the firms that struggled were Allcap, an industrial supplies company, which tried a nine-day fortnight and found that after "nine extreme ones – once [employees] got to their scheduled day off they were exhausted".

Nevertheless, polling last week showed 58% of the British public expected a four-day week to be the normal way of working by 2030, with only 22% believing it would not.

Bridget Smith, leader of the Lib Dem-controlled council, said bin routes had been rationalised and "everybody will be working more intensely and productively".

The council has been spending about £2m a year on agency staff but estimates this bill could be halved if all posts were filled permanently.

Woman, 95, unable to use breathing machine due to flooding in council home

Sarah Marsh

A 95-year-old woman receiving palliative care has been left unable to use her breathing equipment due to power cuts caused by persistent flooding at her council-run house.

Asabu Laher, who lives in Clapham, south London, is bedbound, blind and suffering from organ failure. She is receiving end-of-life support at the home she shares with her three children, who have learning difficulties.

But Laher's family say the house floods monthly, causing power cuts - and that they first flagged the issue a year and a half ago. The flooding, which started more than 30 years ago, is partly due to tree roots damaging the external drains.

"They did tanking [the application of a coating] around the walls in the basement many years ago now. But ... the problem has returned. It is ruining the foundations of the property and the main electricity has stopped working with the amount of water in there. Over time, the foundations will become soft and the building may collapse," said Laher's grandson Maajid Patel.

He added that the council sends a company around to drain the water after it floods, although the company does not always arrive. However, he claims there has been no attempt to address what is causing the deluge.

"We have said if you cannot be bothered to fix the leak in the basement then at least bring mains electricity points upstairs [to avoid power outages]," he said.

On 3 May, the water level in the basement reached 73cm, causing a power cut to the entire house. It meant Laher could not use the machine that helps her with breathing. Her family phoned the council at midday, her grandson said, but "nobody showed up" to fix the issue after an initial appraisal at 2pm.

"I called Lambeth again at 7pm to chase it up and was told by two colleagues that they were due to come out for the repair. By this point my grandmother was struggling to breathe already as she hadn't had access to her oxygen tank for the entire day," Patel said.

"Unfortunately, as we expected, nobody came and at 11pm we had to put my grandmother in a taxi and pull her out of her home and into our house in Streatham so we could provide her with working electricity for her oxygen machine."

Patel said he had struggled to get any "compassion" from Lambeth . "We have unfortunately received minimal support from Lambeth repairs. We are completely drained, broken and tired from the constant lack of care from Lambeth."

A spokesperson for Lambeth council said it accepted its services "fell below its normal standards on this occasion", apologising to Laher and her family "for any frustration and inconvenience this has caused".

They added: "The council has carried out a number of repairs to tackle leaks at this property. But it has proved to be a complex problem - for example, a CCTV survey has found that multiple tree roots have damaged the external drains.

"Our contractors will be at the property tomorrow to drain the basement and to work on the longer-term issues with the drains over the coming days. The electricity supply will be restored once it is tested."



PHOTOGRAPH: CHLOE TORRING/PA

'Like a war zone' Emergency services were called out after 13 vehicles were set alight overnight in Wimborne Minster and Poole, Dorset. Police are seeking CCTV footage.



'Stalker' doctor faces inquiry after sharing patient's records

Denis Campbell
Health policy editor

The UK medical regulator has launched an investigation into a "stalker" doctor who accessed intimate details of a woman's health history after she began dating the consultant's ex-boyfriend.

The General Medical Council (GMC) is investigating whether the doctor – from Addenbrooke's hospital in Cambridge – breached their professional, ethical and legal duties to protect the woman's personal information.

The victim has given the watchdog a statement detailing the consultant's repeated violations of her medical records and documentation that shows what she did.

The GMC declined to comment because it has not yet decided to open a formal disciplinary case against the consultant, who could face serious sanctions, including a ban on working as a doctor. However, one of its investigative officers is examining the claims and collecting evidence.

The Guardian revealed on Sunday that the doctor had looked at the victim's hospital and GP records seven times last autumn in the early stages of the woman's relationship with a man the consultant had been involved with for several years.

The victim said she had felt "anger, fear, shock and horror" when an audit by Addenbrooke's of who had accessed her records showed that the doctor – who was not involved in her care – had spent time reading them, including while on holiday.

The consultant shared some of the information she had gleaned on the victim and her family with the ex-boyfriend, saying she had obtained it from friends, members of her choir, and gossip.

Cambridge university hospitals NHS trust, which runs Addenbrooke's, has acknowledged the breaches and apologised to the woman. It said the doctor's behaviour had been "fully investigated in line with the trust's disciplinary policy and appropriate action taken". But it declined to say what sanctions, if any, had been taken, citing the doctor's right to privacy.

The Guardian has decided not to name the doctor or the victim. The consultant used Epic, the Addenbrooke's hospital records system, to access the woman's GP records, which contained highly sensitive details about a family tragedy and how it had affected the victim and her children.

The woman said: "My referral to the GMC was based on my concern that a doctor had illegitimately accessed my data and used it in a destructive or malicious manner. In doing so, she had broken the law, as well as her ethical, professional and contractual obligations."

Doctors can access patients' medical records, but need a legitimate reason for doing so. Under NHS data governance procedures, they must assure their employer that they have a valid clinical interest in seeking access, usually because they are part of the team treating the patient.

Sam Smith, of medConfidential, a health data specialist, said the NHS has no idea how often a doctor accesses a patient's medical records without due cause, as in this case. Patients rarely complain as they have no way of knowing that it has happened, unless someone tells them, and the NHS has no way of establishing whether staff who have looked at records did so for the proper reasons.

Meat out, beans in as caterers struggle to keep up supply of school meals

Sally Weale
Education correspondent

Some schools are substituting lentils and beans in for meat in pupils' lunches or cutting portion sizes because of rising costs, food shortages and problematic supply chains, say caterers.

A survey by LACA, a professional body representing caterers in England and Wales, found 77% of members polled had changed their menus because of supply issues, while 26% had reduced choice.

They reported being "increasingly concerned" over the future of school meals, particularly in rural areas where rising transport costs had hit hard. They also warned of shortages of basic items including eggs, tomatoes, fish, chicken and cucumbers.

LACA received responses from 87 of its 900 members, who provide services in more than 11,500 schools and feed a total of 1.1 million pupils daily.

Almost all (98%) said they were facing food shortages, while 29%) had substituted meat with cheaper alternatives such as lentils and pulses and 8% had cut portion sizes. Almost two in five (38%) had reduced menu options, while one in 10 had reduced the nutritional value of their meals.

Nearly a fifth (19%) said meeting school food standards in full was becoming increasingly difficult – up from 12.5% in November – while 17% had considered moving from hot food to a cold service, up from 4%.

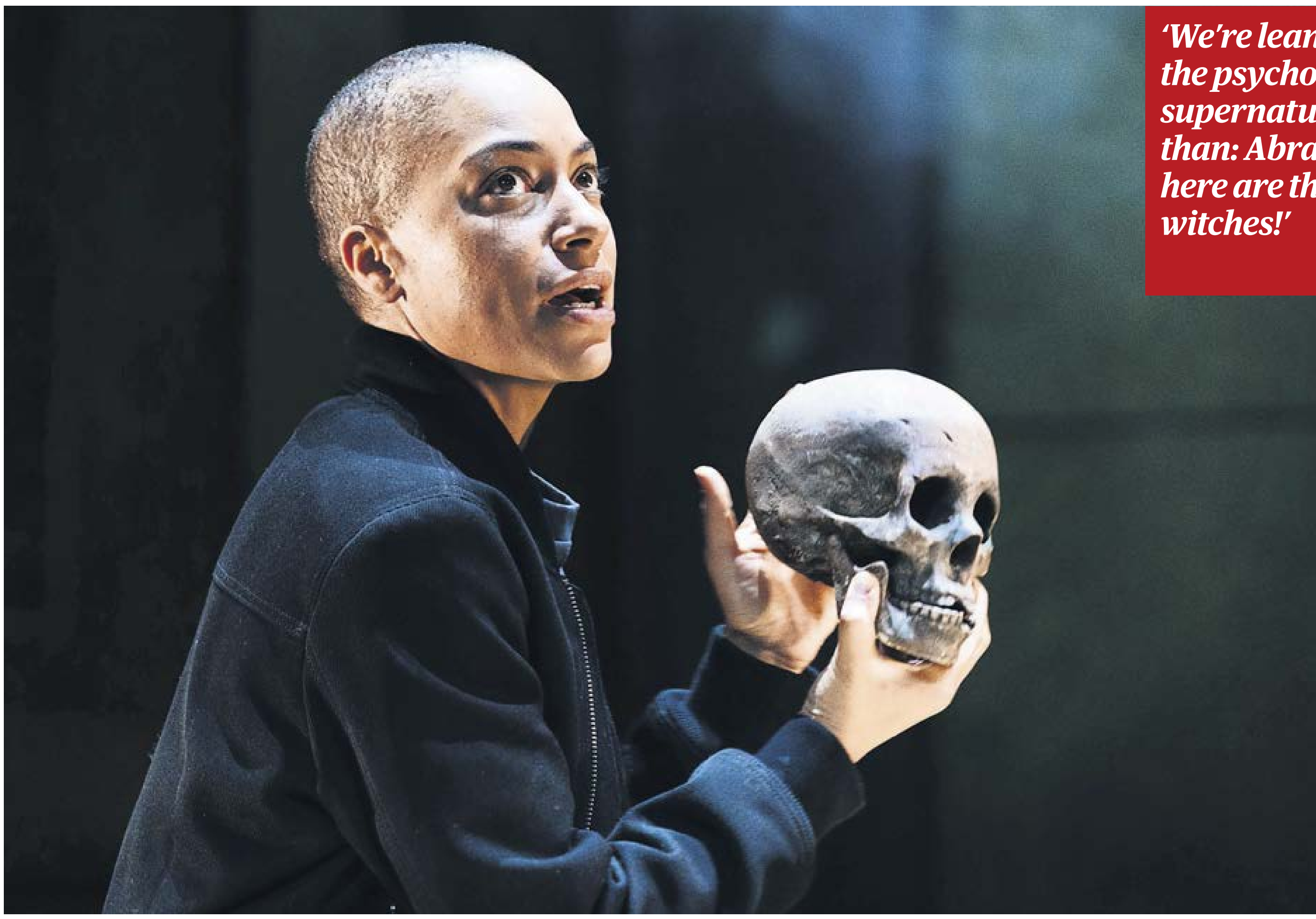
"It is incredibly difficult and it pains me to say that we cannot currently meet all of the standards every day," one caterer told LACA. "No profit at all on school meals now – it's not sustainable!" said another.

Caterers said they had seen a 20% rise in the cost of food since November, "on top of the additional rises reported last year of over 50%". To save costs, 13% had switched from British meat to meat from abroad.

LACA's chair, Brad Pearce, said the survey "highlights why funding for school meals must urgently increase, if caterers are to continue delivering a hot, healthy and nutritious provision … the current allocated funding of £2.41 for universal infant free school meals and £2.47 for benefit-based free school meals is falling short".

A Department for Education spokesperson said: "To recognise the pressures facing schools, in April 2022 we announced an £18m increase in funding for universal infant free school meals to support with costs around food, transport and staff wages."

98%
Proportion of poll respondents who reported facing food shortages and seeing substitutions in supply chains



'We're leaning into the psychology of the supernatural, rather than: Abracadabra, here are the three witches!'

◀ *Cush Jumbo as Hamlet in Greg Hersov's production for the Young Vic, London, in 2021 – an experience she called 'life-changing'*
PHOTOGRAPH: HELEN MURRAY

Cush Jumbo follows Hamlet with role of Lady Macbeth at Donmar

Chris Wiegand

Cush Jumbo is to play Lady Macbeth this winter at the Donmar Warehouse in London, reuniting with David Tennant, her co-star in the Channel 4 TV series Deadwater Fell.

Earlier this month it was announced that Tennant would take on the title role in Max Webster's production of Macbeth, expected to be one of this year's hottest tickets.

Jumbo said Lady Macbeth was an irresistible part for actors, adding: "She's on everybody's list."

Webster, who directed Kit Harington as Henry V at the Donmar last year, stages Shakespeare "in the now", said Jumbo. As such, one task will be "to make sense of the supernatural" in a modern setting. "We're leaning into the psychology of that rather than: 'Abracadabra, here are three witches!'"

Her last Shakespearean role, as Hamlet at the Young Vic in 2021, was "life-changing" for Jumbo. "You really can't have much more of a workout than that – you come back with much stronger muscles for next time," she said.

Working together on Deadwater Fell, before she played the Dane, Jumbo and Tennant –Hamlet at the RSC in 2008 – discussed Shakespeare in depth, she said. The crime drama was their first project together, although "we moved around each other in the Doctor Who universe" because she was in the BBC sci-fi show's spin-off, Torchwood, in 2009.

Jumbo has just finished filming the thriller Criminal Record for Apple TV+ on which she served as executive producer and stars with another former Doctor, Peter Capaldi. Filmed in London, it is a police corruption story she describes as "really exciting, very dark".

The stage-fighting skills she honed on Hamlet proved useful for Jumbo's role in another new thriller, Balestra, about an Olympic fencer. "I gave myself a stress fracture while I was training to fence," she said.

Jumbo and Tennant's Macbeth is among a wave of star-powered Shakespeare productions this year. Ralph Fiennes and Indira Varma will play the lead roles in Simon Godwin's tour of the same play, opening in Liverpool, while Kenneth Branagh is taking on King Lear in the West End.

Macbeth is at Donmar Warehouse, London, 8 December to 10 February

Tory MPs accuse Braverman of pitching to be next PM in rightwing migration speech

Continued *from page 1*

but it's going to take a lot more than this one speech to make her party leader. It makes me despair, she should be concentrating on the immigration figures and our strategy for dealing with them," they added.

In her speech to the conference, organised by rightwing populist US thinktank the Edmund Burke Foundation, Braverman commented on the need for the UK to cut back on legal migration and train domestic workers for jobs such as fruit picking.

But she began with a description of her father's arrival from Kenya in 1968 and her mother's move from Mauritius to train as a nurse. She said her politics, like that of her parents, was "a politics of optimism, pride, national unity, aspiration and realism". She continued: "The left's is a politics of pessimism, guilt, national division, resentment and utopianism. The left … sees the purpose of



Suella Braverman accused the left of being ashamed of British history

politics as to eradicate the existence of inequality, even if that comes at the expense of individual liberty and human flourishing."

Braverman said conservatism "has no truck with political correctness", in a part of the speech that squarely addressed culture war issues. In one of a series of attacks on Keir Starmer, she said that "given his definition of a woman, we can't rule him out from running to be Labour's first female prime minister". She said those on the left "are ashamed of our history" and could "only sell its vision for the future by making people feel terrible about our past", adding: "Nobody should be blamed for things that happened before they were born."

In apparent criticism of academics and advisers in "ivory towers", she said Tories should be "sceptical of self-appointed gurus, experts and elites who think they know best what is in the public's interest".

The National Conservatism event came two days after Boris Johnson revivalists gathered in Bournemouth in another challenge to Sunak's authority. The prime minister will use a meeting with other leaders at the Council of Europe in Iceland today, scheduled for talks about Russia's invasion of Ukraine, to urge them to tighten the continent's borders.

"Every single point on each route used by traffickers to smuggle people across our continent represents another community struggling to deal with the human cost of this barbaric enterprise," he will say.

"Our international system is not working and our communities and the world's most vulnerable people are paying the price.

"We need to do more to cooperate … to end illegal migration and stop the boats. I am clear that as an active European nation with a proud history helping those in need, the UK will be at the heart of this."

The Home Office has reportedly been given data showing a further rise in migration, with the Telegraph reporting as many as 1.1 million foreign workers and students could arrive in 2024.

Downing Street played down suggestions of a rift between Sunak and his home secretary, confirming that it had approved the text of her speech and that Braverman was speaking on behalf of the government.

"We want to see employers make long-term investments in the UK domestic workforce instead of relying on overseas labour as part of building a high-wage and high-skilled economy and we are supporting those industries in doing that," the prime minister's official spokesman said.

The 2019 Tory manifesto promised that "overall numbers will come down" on immigration. However, next week's figures are expected to show that more than 800,000 people arrived in the UK last year.

Jeremy Hunt and Gillian Keegan are understood to have watered down an immigration crackdown on foreign students after arguing that it could damage the university sector as well as the economy more broadly.

But Braverman is expected to announce that one-year masters students will be banned from bringing family members to the UK as part of attempts to reduce net migration.

'Cultural Marxism'
Conservative MP echoes conspiracy theory

A Conservative MP claimed at the start of the National Conservatism conference that the UK's low birthrate was the most pressing policy issue of this generation and was caused in part by "cultural Marxism" stripping young people of any hope.

Addressing the London gathering, Miriam Cates said western countries faced an existential threat from falling reproduction, arguing that a lack of family-friendly tax policy in the UK played a significant role, as well as a shortage of housing.

But Cates, seen as a rising star in a new generation of culture-warrior Tory MPs, also blamed too many young people attending university, the devaluing of motherhood, and what she described as the mass indoctrination of young minds.

"Having a home, a secure job and support from your family, community and nation are not the only conditions to starting a family," Cates told the event. "You must also have hope for the future. And that hope is not reaching so many of our young people today, because liberal individualism has proved to be completely powerless to resist a cultural Marxism that is systematically destroying our children's souls."

She added: "When culture, schools and universities openly teach that our country is racist, our heroes are villains, humanity is killing the Earth, you are what you desire, diversity is



A protester interrupts the keynote speech given by Jacob Rees-Mogg

theology, boundaries are tyranny and self-restraint is oppression, is it any wonder that mental health conditions, self-harm and suicide, and epidemic levels of anxiety and confusion characterise the emerging generation?"

The use of "cultural Marxism" as a description is controversial because it is linked to a conspiracy theory often associated with the far right and antisemitism.

Jacob Rees-Mogg, the former cabinet minister, used his address to give an intellectual argument for national conservatism. He reiterated his condemnation of Sunak for breaking a promise to repeal any EU-origin laws by the end of this year, but urged people to support the PM "because the alternative is far worse".

Peter Walker and Pippa Crerar





Drones supplied by UK could extend Ukraine's attack capabilities



Sources: the Institute for the Study of War with AEI's Critical Threats project, Guardian research. Note: ranges plotted from edge of Ukrainian controlled territory and do not include areas under partisan Ukrainian control within the territory





◀ *Rishi Sunak with Volodymyr Zelenskiy at Chequers. After welcoming the Ukrainian leader to his country retreat (above and left) the PM compared him to Churchill*
PHOTOGRAPHS: SIMON DAWSON/NO 10 DOWNING STREET

Zelenskiy in Britain Ukrainian president pushing for F-16 jets as Sunak pledges more arms

Dan Sabbagh
Kiran Stacey
Matthew Weaver

Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelenskiy hinted on a surprise visit to the UK that Kyiv could soon receive F-16 jet fighters, saying he was hopeful of "very important" decisions soon on the subject with the help of the UK.

The president flew in by helicopter yesterday morning for a meeting with Rishi Sunak at Chequers, the prime minister's country retreat, the latest stop in a tour of Europe that has already seen him visit Rome, Berlin and Paris.

Britain also promised to supply "hundreds of attack drones" capable of operating at 125 miles, although this description did not match any known UK capability and the Ministry of Defence refused to give any extra details as to what was on offer.

Speculation centred on whether the drones were a 3D-printed, suicide drone made by the UK defence company Qinetiq. A press release from the company referring to them was removed from its website in February after it was picked up and reported on by a specialist publication.

Standing next to Sunak after the meeting, Zelenskiy said the two men had discussed fighter planes "because we can't control the sky" and that he was positive about persuading the US and other western nations to supply them.

"We want to create this jets coalition and I'm very positive with it," Zelenskiy said. "We spoke about it and I see that in the closest time you will hear some, I think very important decisions but we have to work a little bit more on it."

Sunak, clearly happy to be with the Ukrainian leader, said he was supportive, while acknowledging the complexity of providing fighter jets. "It's not just the provision of planes, it's also the training of pilots and all the logistics that go alongside that and the UK can play a big part in that," the prime minister said.

The UK said in February it would begin training Ukrainian pilots in standard Nato techniques, and Downing St repeated that yesterday saying the plan was to help "build a new Ukrainian air force with Nato-standard, F-16 jets".

Britain itself does not use F-16s, made by Lockheed Martin in South Carolina. But Ukraine has sought to obtain them for some time to augment its small Soviet-standard airforce, because they are widely available, with around 3,000 in service in 25 countries.

However, both countries will have to persuade the US if Ukraine is to receive F-16s.

Asked if the US had changed its position on supplying the jets to Ukraine, John Kirby, a spokesperson for the White House's National Security Council, gave a one word reply. "No," he told reporters.

On Zelenskiy's last trip to the UK, he addressed both houses of parliament asking for "wings for freedom" and pleaded for Britain to give Ukraine European-made Typhoons. But that demand was dropped because it was deemed impractical, and Ukraine went back to calling for F-16s.

A Downing St spokesman said: "The Ukrainians made the decision to train their pilots on F-16 jets – you know the RAF don't use those," and added that subsequent to Zelenskiy's previous trip, "the Ukrainians made clear they wish to use F-16s".

The long-range drones referred to by Downing St appear to be similar in capability to Iranian made Shahed-136s repeatedly used by Russia to bomb Ukraine's cities, and would help Ukraine hit targets beyond the 50-mile range of the Himars rocket artillery, currently the principal longer range weapon in its arsenal.

One drone expert voiced concern the UK and other European countries seemed focused on supplying "evermore lethal military hardware". Chris Coles from Drone Wars said instead of "escalating the conflict by supplying evermore lethal arms, the UK should be urging negotiations to end the war".

In the preceding 48 hours, Germany committed €2.7bn of military aid to Ukraine, including older Leopard 1 tanks and Marder fighting vehicles while France said it would provide more AMX-10RC light tanks and train more of Kyiv's troops as part of wider international efforts.

Sunak also took Zelenskiy to the Hawtrey Room, where Sir Winston Churchill gave some of his radio addresses during the war.

Sunak made a direct comparison between the two men saying that in "the same way today, your leadership, your country's bravery and fortitude are an inspiration to us all".

Fresh missile strikes *Page 22* →

Sketch
John Crace



We must never say anything we know to be false, says Braverman, lying through her teeth

We're spoiled. On Saturday we were gifted the Take Control conference of the Conservative Democratic Organisation. A collection of 200 or so weirdos, led by Nadine Dorries and Andrea Jenkyns, whose lives have been devastated by the absence of Boris Johnson. Needless to say Johnson himself couldn't be bothered to attend in person. Instead sending down a few signed bottles – not ones he had bought, obviously – to be auctioned in his memory.

Now we are being treated to the National Conservativism Conference. The Nat Cons. A meeting of minds for those who think that Viktor Orbán and Giorgia Meloni might have a point. The sort of audience where Jordan Peterson would get a hero's welcome.

But we had to make do with the Tory backbencher Miriam Cates instead as the warm-up act. Her message was that we needed more babies. Urgently. There were some obvious flaws with this. First, her audience was 75% male. Then there was the question of what kind of babies the UK needed. As Cates was quick to blame immigration for the low birthrate, it's safe to assume she didn't think that foreign babies were wanted. Some babies were more equal than others.

Cates went on to moan about the divorce rate. Married people weren't taking their vows nearly seriously enough. Far better for a woman to die of exhaustion having eight children she didn't want than to make her own choices. It wasn't clear exactly where the homes for all these large families would be found. Perhaps they could all go in the houses that the immigrants were now living in. And the immigrants could all go somewhere else. She was all heart. Naturally, she didn't think the nanny state should be involved in helping women to raise these babies. "Conservatism is always common sense," concluded Cates, having talked complete bollocks for 20 minutes.

> *We raced through a selective account of the last 1,000 years, all of which had been a precursor to that glorious day in 2016*

Jacob Rees-Mogg at least was off the hook, having already had six children. His version of conservatism was that he knew best. Rees-Mogg has yet to discover an issue on which he was wrong. We raced through a highly selective account of the last 1,000 years of English history, all of which had been a precursor to that glorious day in June 2016 when the UK left the EU. The housing crisis was caused by planners working from home. Bonkers. Everyone seemed a bit lost and Rees-Mogg was upset there wasn't more applause.

After lunch came a keynote speech from Suella Braverman. This wasn't so much a speech as a leadership bid for a party in opposition. She began with the obligatory 10-minute backstory. Her parents had been hardworking immigrants. Exactly the sort of people she is now committed to keeping out of the country.

Then we came to her beliefs. Braverman is not known for her intellectual hinterland. Those who said Brexit would be an economic catastrophe had been proved wrong. Er … that must be why our economy is the worst performer in the G7. "We Conservatives must never say anything we know to be false," she said, openly lying through her teeth. It was all just a weird combination of the mad and the bland. Does she really believe that only Conservatives love their country? If so, she's dimmer than we thought.

Ministers reveal 600 laws to be ditched in reduced Brexit 'bonfire'

Lisa O'Carroll
Jamie Grierson
Michael Goodier

Ministers have published the list of 600 EU laws the government plans to scrap by the end of the year in a much-reduced Brussels "bonfire" that has enraged hardline Brexiters in the Tory party.

In a significant retreat on its retained EU law bill, it has slashed the number of environmental laws that would have automatically expired on 31 December from 1,700 to 341.

The list includes rules governing habitat regulations dating from 1996 governing salt marshes and river fringes, and orders relating to environmentally sensitive areas including places in the Broads, Pennine Dales, South Downs and West Penwith.

In explanatory notes the government says these rules are no longer operational or "no longer relevant to the UK". The former diplomat Lord Kerr, who was behind the article 50 rule that allowed Brexit, said he believed most of nearly 600 laws to be revoked by the government in its published list are "defunct", but said he agreed with peers across the House that parliamentary scrutiny was important. It is currently at report stage in the House of Lords.

A significant chunk of the repealed laws relates to fisheries, including sustainable fisheries partnership agreements with a range of countries from the Gambia to Seychelles. Other legislation relates to fish stocks in the Black Sea and Mediterranean.

There are also several laws being repealed that relate to "biocidal products" such as disinfectants, wood preservatives and insect repellents.

Legislation that gave access to a valuable EU-wide criminal database, known as Ecris, has also formally been torn up. The Ecris database holds conviction information on third-country nationals and stateless persons. By leaving the EU, the UK automatically lost access to Ecris, and the repeal will be seen as a formality.

Last night, in a further government defeat, peers backed by 142 votes to 132 a provision to ensure ministerial powers to revoke, replace or update retained EU law do not undermine current environmental protections or food safety standards. The government narrowly saw off a move to add procedural protections of workers' rights by a majority of one.

The bill has reopened old Brexit divisions on Brexit, with accusations of a sellout by Rishi Sunak by the likes of Bill Cash and Jacob Rees-Mogg.

Rees-Mogg branded the decision to scale back the list of laws to go from 5,000 to 600 as "pathetically underambitious". "Rishi Sunak made a specific promise to scrap thousands of EU laws," he said at the National Conservatism conference yesterday.

"He's broken that promise. This is very unfortunate as one of his virtues is his trustworthiness and the surrender to the blob risks exposing the government to ridicule."

But legal experts and opponents said the bill was "reckless" and "irresponsible" in sweeping aside the "interpretive effect" of EU law, and through its granting of unprecedented powers to allow ministers to decide which laws should go without full parliamentary scrutiny.

Yesterday peers including more than a dozen Conservatives voted to amend the bill to include a requirement that any laws going through the shredder go before a joint committee in both houses of parliament with a debate and vote.

Campaigners will be joining environmental groups and trade unions, which have condemned the act, to study the list for loopholes.

Other rules for the chop according to the government list include membership of the Council of Europe convention on an integrated safety, security and service approach at football matches and other sports events.

A directive related to measures that must be taken by credit and financial institutions to mitigate money laundering and terrorist financing risk in certain third countries is also destined for the scrapheap.

Other environment laws being targeted include rules relating to a countryside stewardship scheme and flood risk regulations from 2009, which the government says in explanatory notes "have been superseded by UK legislation or is a duplicate of existing domestic legislation".

Voting rights
EU citizens in UK deserve a voice - Starmer

Lisa O'Carroll
Brexit correspondent

Keir Starmer has said it "feels wrong" not to allow EU citizens who live and pay tax in the UK not to have the right to vote in general elections.

While the Labour leader said there was "no settled policy", he confirmed in an interview on LBC radio yesterday that the party was "looking at some of the voting issues".

The prospective change could enfranchise about 5 million EU citizens over the age of 18 living in the UK with settled status.

Starmer has said it does not pass the "common sense test" that settled migrants who have worked in the UK for decades do not have full voting rights.

He told the LBC presenter Nick Ferrari: "The thinking behind it is if someone's been here say 10, 20, 30 years, contributing to this economy, contributing to the community, they ought to be able to vote.

"Let me bring it alive - I've knocked on a lot of doors in the last few years, and you go to doors sometimes in a general election and you're met with someone who says: 'Look, I'm an EU citizen, I've been living here for 30 years, I'm married to a Brit. My kids were raised and brought up here, they're now working in the UK, we're all working in lots of community projects, but I can't vote.'

"That feels wrong, and something ought to be done about it."

Some non-British residents - Irish nationals and qualifying Commonwealth citizens - already have the right to vote in all elections in the UK as a result of historic ties.



▲ *Keir Starmer said current voting laws did not pass the 'common sense test'*
PHOTOGRAPH: JORDAN PETTITT/PA

Extending that right to vote in general elections to other migrants has prompted criticism within Conservative party ranks and from Tory supporters.

The Daily Mail in its front page headline yesterday declared that Starmer was intending to "use EU citizens to 'rig' polls", while the Tory party chair, Greg Hands, accused Labour of "laying the groundwork to drag the UK back into the EU by stealth".

Hands told the Telegraph: "This is an attempt to rig the electorate to rejoin the EU.

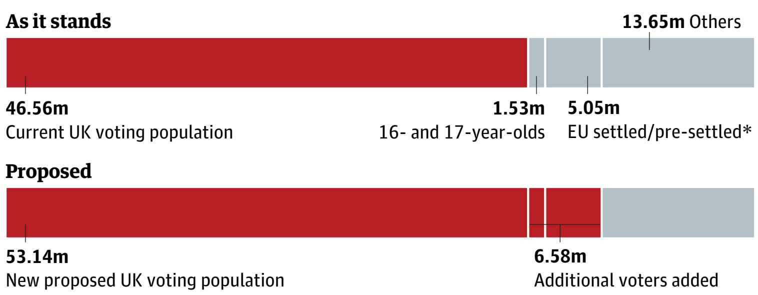
"The right to vote in parliamentary elections and choose the next UK government is rightly restricted to British citizens and those with the closest historical links to our country."

The opposition leader said Labour was also considering expanding the voting franchise to allow 16- and 17-year-olds and settled migrants to cast a ballot.

Allowing teenagers aged 16 and over to vote was also "not such an outlandish idea", he said.

Starmer added: "These are some of the ideas that are going into the mix, but they're not policy - we're just looking at them."

How possible voting reforms being considered by Labour could change the electorate



Sources: Home Office, UK censuses 2021, ONS. Note: *to avoid double counting of the 16-year-old cohort, this grouping excludes under-18s

Economy
Students from overseas 'bring £42bn boost'

Sally Weale
Education correspondent

The economic benefit international students bring to the UK jumped by a third over three years, boosting the economy by an estimated £42bn in 2021-22, according to new analysis.

The report, by the consultancy London Economics, said the economic benefit rose from £31.3bn in 2018-19 to £41.9bn three years later as growing numbers of international students chose to study in the UK.

The research, published today, comes as the government considers imposing restrictions on international students coming to the UK to help reduce the net migration figure.

Rishi Sunak is said to be braced for a record rise in net migration this month, possibly near to a million, up from a record-breaking 504,000.

Ministers are thought be considering visa restrictions for international students' dependants and reductions in their post-study work visa rights.

The report on the costs and benefits of international higher education students to the UK is published by Universities UK International (UUKi), the Higher Education Policy Institute and Kaplan International Pathways, with London Economics.

There has been a 68% increase in the number of new international students from non-EU countries since 2018-19 (with the number of EU students plummeting) and universities have become increasingly dependent on them and the higher fees they pay.

Dr Gavan Conlon, a partner at London Economics, said international students put nearly 10 times more into the economy than they took out.

▼ *Kate Winslet with her daughter, Mia Threapleton, backstage at the Bafta awards on Sunday night*
PHOTOGRAPH: SCOTT GARFITT/BAFTA/GETTY



Stop harmful digital content, Winslet urges after Bafta win

Dan Milmo

Online safety campaigners have welcomed Kate Winslet's call on "people in power" to criminalise harmful digital content during her Bafta acceptance speech, as the UK parliament debates legislation to rein in social media platforms.

The actor won the television award on Sunday for her portrayal of a mother whose teenage daughter is suffering mental health problems due to viewing damaging online content.

Accepting the award for best leading actress for the Channel 4 drama I Am Ruth, in which she acted alongside her real-life daughter, Mia Threapleton, Winslet said: "We want our children back."

She added: "For young people who have become addicted to social media and its darker sides, this does not need to be your life. To people in power, and to people who can make change, please, criminalise harmful content."

The Molly Rose Foundation - established by the family of teenager Molly Russell, who took her own life in 2017 after viewing material related to self-harm and suicide - said it was time the government "listened to the chorus of concerned parents" and delivered strong legislation.

Referring to Prince William's call for better protection of children online following a landmark inquest into Russell's death last year, a foundation spokesperson said: "It makes no difference if you are the winner of a best actress Bafta or the heir to the throne, families across the UK are concerned about keeping children safe in our unregulated digital world. It's not only the readily found harmful content that causes concern but also the tech platforms' algorithms that push digital dangers to vulnerable young people every day."

The spokesperson said the government must deliver an online safety bill addressing the scale of the problem. The bill imposes a duty of care on tech firms to shield children from harmful content but members of the House of Lords are currently trying to strengthen the legislation.

A cross-party group of peers, led by the former culture secretary Nicky Morgan, will put forward several measures when the bill is debated in the upper chamber today. As a part of the proposals, social media bosses could face jail terms of up to two years for persistent breaches.

Beeban Kidron, a leading online safety campaigner, said: "Kate Winslet is giving voice to what millions of parents and children are expressing."

Lady Kidron added that the government was "pushing back" on some amendments. Peers are seeking stronger rules on age-checking measures and setting out children's rights on the face of the bill. "I would like a commitment from No 10 to strengthening the bill for children and for parliament as a whole to put its weight behind the needs of children to thrive online," she said.

The NSPCC said Winslet's remarks would "resonate with parents up and down the country". Rani Govender, its senior child safety online policy officer, said: "Regulation will start to bring the tech sector in line with other industries and ensure they have to assess and mitigate the risks of their products so they are safe for young users, but the pushback from some companies will be considerable."

A government spokesperson said the "world-leading" bill would protect children on a range of platforms, with companies that breach the act facing fines of up to 10% of global turnover. Protecting children "is an absolute priority", they said.

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Intensive farming 'the biggest cause of bird decline in Europe'

Damien Gayle

The use of pesticides and fertilisers in intensive agriculture is the biggest cause of the dwindling number of birds in the UK and the rest of Europe, scientists have said.

Compared with a generation ago, 550 million fewer birds fly over the continent, with their decline well documented. But until now the relative importance of various pressures on bird populations was unknown.

A team of more than 50 researchers, analysing data collected by thousands of citizen scientists in 28 countries over nearly four decades, found that it is intensive agriculture, above all, that is behind the decline in the continent's bird populations.

They found the number of wild birds of all kinds across the continent has fallen by more than a quarter since 1980, but that this decline deepened to more than half among farmland species.

Birds that rely on invertebrates for food, including swifts and spotted flycatchers, were the hardest hit. "It's more than a smoking gun," said Richard Gregory, a senior conservation scientist at the RSPB, and one of the lead authors of the study. "I don't think a study has looked at all these factors in one go … and it comes out with a very clear message."

The study, published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, examined how 170 bird species had responded to agricultural intensification, forest cover change, urbanisation and the climate crisis.

Farmland species suffered the most precipitous decline, with numbers falling by 56.8% since research began, the study said. Numbers of urban dwelling birds were down 27.8%, and among woodland dwelling birds the fall was 17.7%.

But in all contexts intensive agriculture, which has risen across Europe, was identified as a major factor in decline, with the slaughter of invertebrates as pests creating a "trophic cascade" up the food chain.

Only "the rapid implementation of transformative change in European societies, and especially in agricultural reform" could save the continent's bird populations, the researchers said.

In brief

Health

Sweeteners 'do not aid long-term weight loss'

Replacing sugar with sweeteners does not help people manage their weight in the long term, the World Health Organization has said.

A systematic review by the WHO on the use of non-sugar sweeteners (NSS) has concluded they could raise the risk of health problems including type 2 diabetes.

"Replacing free sugars with NSS does not help with weight control in the long term. People need to consider other ways to reduce free sugars intake, such as consuming food with naturally occurring sugars, like fruit, or unsweetened food and beverages," the WHO said. **Nicola Davis**

Courts

Two brothers jailed for £2m health card fraud

Two brothers from Sunderland have been jailed for defrauding £2m from people who thought they needed to pay for European health insurance cards (Ehics).

Damien Sartip Zadeh, 32, was jailed for nine and a half years and his brother Dale, 35, for eight years after being found guilty of fraudulent trading and laundering the proceeds between 2013 and 2019. Ehics were issued free of charge, allowing people to access state-provided healthcare when visiting an EU country or Switzerland. They have since been replaced by global health insurance cards. **Mark Brown**

Competition watchdog

Supermarkets face fuel price questions

The competition watchdog is to question supermarket bosses after finding evidence that their fuel prices are unnecessarily high.

The Competition and Markets Authority said high pump prices could not be solely blamed on global factors, such as Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and said it had found evidence of weakening competition among retailers.

The watchdog said it was concerned that supermarkets were taking larger margins than before Covid, with average 2022 prices about 5p a litre higher than they would have been had 2019 margins been maintained. **Alex Lawson**



▼ *Paint sprayed by climate activists on to a Gucci store in Berlin's Kurfürstendamm last month*
PHOTOGRAPH: OMER MESSINGER/GETTY



Ads claiming carbon neutrality via offsetting face ban by ASA

Continued *from page 1*

neutral", "net zero" and "nature positive" as part of a greenwashing crackdown later this year after a six-month review.

Under the plans, the ASA will take action against firms that tell consumers they can buy their products without making global heating or nature loss worse by virtue of purchasing offsets – unless they can demonstrate they really are effective. The move follows recent enforcement by the ASA against Lufthansa and Etihad about green claims. Companies will still be allowed to talk about their sustainability efforts, the Guardian understands.

In January, a joint Guardian investigation found that many rainforest offsets certified by Verra, which operates the world's leading carbon standard, had little impact despite being widely used by major companies for environmental claims, also finding evidence of forced evictions at a flagship project in Peru used by Disney and Apple. The findings were strongly disputed by Verra.

While halting deforestation and protecting ecosystems is urgently required to limit global heating and biodiversity loss, analysis of scientific research into the rainforest projects found that most either stopped no forest loss or had dramatically overstated their impact approved by Verra's system. Last month, a report by the carbon credit rating agency Calyx Global echoed the concerns about the environmental integrity of the credits, although other organisations have a more positive view.

Scientists have called for the unregulated system to be urgently reformed to finance climate mitigation and forest conservation, and Verra is in the process of launching a new methodology for certifying rainforest carbon credits.

Amid concerns about credibility, companies are increasingly being encouraged to say they are making climate contributions when purchasing carbon credits instead of claiming they have offset their emissions.

The carbon market data firm AlliedOffsets monitors offset purchasing data for the £1.6bn market, recording several major purchases by leading companies.

Gucci, Italy's most valuable luxury brand, with revenues of €10.5bn (£9bn) in 2022, which announced it had become "entirely carbon neutral" in 2019 in part using Verra's rainforest offsets, has deleted the claim from its website and said it was no longer working with South Pole, the Swiss carbon credit consultancy it partnered with on the commitment.

"At Gucci, we are regularly reviewing our environmental claims in order to uphold the best science-based standards, as well as align with the global regulatory framework," a spokesperson said. "Since setting our carbon neutral goal in 2018, our strategy has evolved progressively and now encompasses a nature-positive approach, including protecting and restoring biodiversity, investing in regenerative agriculture and supporting local communities," it added.

South Pole said climate neutrality claims had sometimes been misunderstood or misappropriated by companies, and said it stood against greenwashing.

In September, easyJet announced it would stop offsetting carbon emissions from its planes, having previously used Verra's rainforest offsets to claim its flights were "carbon neutral".

Apple, which became the first company to reach a $3tn market value last year and bought Verra rainforest offsets for its corporate carbon neutrality claim in 2022, said offsetting was just one part of its efforts, alongside aggressive emission reductions and expanding renewable energy usage. It said nature-based offsets remained a part of its plans to make Apple products carbon neutral by the end of this decade.



▲ *Indigenous Siekopai children in the Peruvian Amazon rainforest*

Major oil companies are some of the biggest buyers of carbon offsets to help meet their climate pledges while continuing to invest in fossil fuels. The Guardian revealed earlier this year that Shell, which is a major buyer of Verra carbon credits, had set aside more than £367m to invest in "nature-based solutions", which include carbon offsetting projects.

A spokesperson for the oil company said although the carbon market "may not be perfectly functioning everywhere yet" it was still "an important enabler of emissions reduction". Shell said it disagreed with the analysis into Verra's standards and was clear that all carbon offsetting should offer a "robust carbon benefit" by using "credible and independent standards".

BP has a division dedicated to sourcing and trading carbon offset permits, including Verra-certified credits, some of which it has sold alongside cargos of liquefied natural gas.

It has said that the "bundled carbon offset" product could help customers to meet their sustainability targets, but it does not refer to the offering as carbon neutral. BP has also said that it will not use carbon offsets to meet its own net zero targets.

A BP spokesperson said the company was "actively participating in various initiatives focused on strengthening the quality of the voluntary carbon market".

"While we support the ability of companies to use carbon credits … BP has not purchased carbon credits for the purpose of meeting our net zero aims," the spokesperson added.

Analysis
'Greenwashing era over'

Companies in the UK and EU are to face stricter rules over what they can tell consumers about their role in the climate crisis and the loss of nature. Terms such as "carbon neutral", "nature positive" and those concerned with offsetting are to undergo greater scrutiny. Industry insiders say advertising agencies must also reconsider their relationships with major polluters for meaningful action.

"The era of unspecific claims such as 'environmentally friendly' is over," said Jonny White, senior business director at AMV BBDO, an advertising agency which works with the likes of Diageo, Unilever and Bupa.

"Misleading environmental claims are under the microscope from advertising regulators, consumer watchdogs and even governments. The risks of getting it wrong are huge, with brands being shamed publicly when they are guilty of misleading the public."

Across the advertising industry, agencies are wrestling with their role in greenwashing scandals and their support for clients driving the climate and nature crises. Creative teams at agencies are having to work closely with their lawyers when advising clients on their climate claims, insiders say, with the increased risk of fines and advert bans in some countries.

In the UK, the Ad Net Zero programme was launched in 2020 in a bid to reduce the carbon impact of the advertising industry's operations to net zero by 2030, but many agencies are developing in-house teams for sustainability-focused campaigns.

On Thursday, the European parliament voted to ban claims of carbon neutrality that are based on offsetting. "Climate-related claims have been shown to be particularly prone to being unclear and ambiguous, misleading the consumer," said Virginijus Sinkevičius, the EU environment commissioner.

"Claims like 'climate neutral', 'carbon neutral', '100% CO_2 compensated' and 'net zero' are very often based on offsetting. We need to set things straight for consumers and given them full information," he said.

Blake Harrop, the president of Wieden+Kennedy Amsterdam, which works with Airbnb, Amazon Music and Nike, said that the greenwashing clampdown in the EU and UK would provide competitive opportunities for companies that had genuine environmental credentials. "For good brands with good intentions and responsible messaging, I expect there will be little change. But for companies that have oversimplified and overstated their sustainability claims, then life is about to get complicated," he said.

**Ellen Ormesher
Patrick Greenfield**

Morgan knew Mirror stories came from voicemails, royal biographer tells trial

Jim Waterson
Media editor

Piers Morgan knew his journalists were using private voicemails as the basis of their stories, the royal biographer Omid Scobie told Prince Harry's phone-hacking trial yesterday.

Scobie, who co-wrote a sympathetic book about the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, told the high court he was doing work experience at the Daily Mirror in 2002 when he overheard Morgan discussing the source of a story about Kylie Minogue with a reporter.

He said in a witness statement: "Mr Morgan was asking how confident they were in the reporting and was told that the information had come from voicemails. I recall being surprised to hear this at the time, which is why it stuck in my mind."

Scobie said Morgan "seemed reassured" after being informed that the story about Minogue's private life came from voicemails. The journalist said Morgan was "extremely hands-on" and would want to know how his reporters had obtained information: "That's any editor's question: what's the sourcing? Who is the source?"

Harry and the other alleged victims claim Morgan and other Mirror executives authorised illegal behaviour to obtain exclusive stories, such as accessing celebrities' voicemails, paying private investigators and "blagging" financial records.

Morgan, now the lead presenter on Rupert Murdoch's TalkTV, has always insisted there is no evidence he knowingly commissioned stories based on illegal voicemail interception while editing the Daily Mirror between 1995 and 2004.

Mirror Group Newspapers is disputing much of the evidence in this trial and argues that Harry and the other claimants have waited too long to bring their cases.

Andrew Green KC, the Mirror's barrister, suggested Scobie had invented the incident involving Morgan and it was a "false memory".

The lawyer accused Scobie of having a "vested interest in helping the Duke of Sussex" because the journalist's career had benefited from his closeness to the royal couple.

The court heard the duke and duchess had "expressly authorised" their former spokesperson Jason Knauf to brief Scobie when he wrote his book Finding Freedom.

Scobie said all his contact with the royal couple was through their spokesperson. "There was no communication between myself and the Sussexes … Jason sat down and went through a number of points while we were factchecking the book," he said.

The journalist said he had never socialised with Harry and he expected to be heavily criticised by tabloid newspapers for giving evidence. Scobie added that he was tired of being described by the Daily Mail and other outlets as a "pal" of the couple.

The prince is one of four alleged phone-hacking victims whose claims are being tested in a civil trial at the high court. They allege they were illegally targeted by journalists working for Mirror Group Newspapers - the publisher of the Daily Mirror, Sunday Mirror, and People tabloids - with the knowledge of senior executives.

Scobie said he was not shocked to hear Morgan discussing the use of voicemails because he had already encountered phone hacking while doing work experience at the People, the Mirror's sister newspaper.

He added: "I recall being given by a journalist a list of mobile numbers followed by a detailed verbal description of how to listen to voicemails, as if it were a routine newsgathering technique. I was taken aback by what seemed completely immoral and I never carried out the task."

Green said it was improbable that Scobie would have been asked to illegally hack phones while on work experience.Scobie replied: "You would be surprised at what happened during internships."

The trial continues.



▶ *Rocky the akita with the team from Keswick mountain rescue on Saturday. The dog's owners called for help after Rocky 'refused to move' on the climb down*
PHOTOGRAPH: KESWICK MOUNTAIN RESCUE TEAM/SWNS

Barking up the wrong peak: dog rescued after scaling Scafell Pike

Mark Brown
North of England correspondent

A mountain rescue team has praised the "cool, calm and positively regal" demeanour of the subject of a weekend callout: an injured and exhausted dog who got up England's highest peak but refused to come down.

Rocky the akita and its owners successfully climbed Scafell Pike in the Lake District on Saturday but got into trouble on the way down towards Langdale, Keswick mountain rescue team said.

The dog was exhausted, had a cut paw and was "refusing to move".

A call for help was made at about 6.25pm on Saturday and 13 volunteers from the mountain rescue team sprang into action.

They eventually met up with Rocky and its owners, who were starting to feel the cold. After making the dog comfortable, they sledged and carried it down the mountain to safety.

"Despite being quite a large dog at 33kg it was a joy to carry such a relatively lightweight casualty," a spokesperson said, adding that it had "remained cool, calm and positively regal throughout".

After the rescue team posted the incident on its Facebook page there was a mixed reaction.

"Tut, tut, tut," said one post. "Well done to all involved but the dog's owners have a lot to answer for." Dogs are not meant to walk on the fells and the climb was obviously too difficult, it said.

This led to a spirited defence of the dog and taking them on fell walks. "No judgment please," said another, pointing out the dog may have been tired because it was injured.

"Great job," one user said. "I have an American akita myself and all I can say is not at all surprised. Very independent and stubborn dogs and if they say that's enough then that's enough."

Another recalled the day her 32kg labradoodle "went on strike" nine miles into a 10-mile coastal walk in Anglesey. They ended up calling a taxi and "£35 later and back at my car, said labradoodle recovered and starting doing zoomies around the car".



▲ *Neil Tennant co-founded the Pet Shop Boys more than 40 years ago*

Writing songs with help of AI is not a sin, says Pet Shop Boys founder

Jamie Grierson

Neil Tennant of Pet Shop Boys has suggested artificial intelligence (AI) could be a useful tool in a songwriter's kit amid fears over the impact of the technology on the music industry.

Tennant, who co-founded the synthpop duo with Chris Lowe more than 40 years ago, told the Radio Times that AI could be used to help musicians overcome writers' block and finish songs.

The music industry is beginning to mobilise against the perceived threat of fake songs. In October, the Recording Industry Association of America warned that AI companies were violating copyrights en masse by using music to train their machines.

A song featuring AI-generated vocals purporting to be Drake and the Weeknd was pulled from streaming services last month when Universal Music Group filed takedown notices after the song went viral. The label condemned the song, called Heart on My Sleeve, as "infringing content created with generative AI".

But Tennant strikes a more optimistic tone with his interview in the Radio Times. He recounts being amazed by the 15-year-old daughter of the act's manager asking a bot to come up with a song in the style of Pet Shop Boys.

"There's a song that we wrote a chorus for in 2003 and we never finished because I couldn't think of anything for the verses," he said. "But now with AI you could give it the bits you've written, press the button and have it fill in the blanks. You might then rewrite it, but it could nonetheless be a tool."

The duo said they had been impressed by Abba Voyage, the "virtual residency" show in which the Swedish pop stars are represented by avatars of their younger selves.

In March, the Entertainment Industry Coalition published a series of seven core principles regarding the relationship between artificial intelligence and music, detailing the need for AI to "empower human expression" while also asserting the importance of representing "creators' interests … in policymaking".

Tennant, 68, and Lowe, 63, headlined the Other Stage at Glastonbury festival last year.

Former PC 'rushed job' investigating Couzens, police tribunal hears

Emine Sinmaz

A Metropolitan police officer allegedly "did not bother" to properly investigate Wayne Couzens over two incidents of flashing hours before he kidnapped, raped and murdered Sarah Everard.

Former PC Samantha Lee is accused of conducting an "extremely poor" investigation after Couzens exposed himself to female staff at a drive-through McDonald's in Kent on 14 and 27 February 2021, a police disciplinary hearing was told.

Lee reportedly failed to secure the relevant CCTV footage when she attended the restaurant on 3 March just hours before Couzens abducted Everard, 33, in Clapham, south-west London. It was alleged that Lee's behaviour suggested that "she was more intent in getting away quickly than in performing her duties properly", yesterday's hearing heard.

Lee, who was in the Met's south area command unit, was said to have lied and made a "bogus allegation" when questioned about her actions, claiming she had believed the restaurant's CCTV deleted automatically.

She denies gross misconduct and breaching the force's standards. While under investigation, she reportedly quit the force and set up an OnlyFans account called Officer Naughty.

Couzens is currently serving a whole-life term at HMP Frankland for the kidnap, rape and murder of Everard. In March, he was sentenced to 19 months in prison after admitting three counts of indecent exposure.

A manager at a McDonald's in Kent said female staff members had been "horrified" after the two drive-through incidents in February 2021. "On both occasions the customer was sitting in his car with his trousers fully down and his penis out on display," he said in a statement.

The manager made a 999 call to police on 28 February, providing digits from Couzens' Mastercard number and his number plate. He also identified the car as a black Seat Exeo.





▲ Former Met PC Samantha Lee is accused of failing to make 'the correct investigative inquiries' in March 2021 over flashing allegations against Wayne Couzens, below PHOTOGRAPH: JORDAN PETTITT/PA

Opening the case on behalf of the Met police yesterday, Paul Ozin KC told the hearing that after the manager reported the incidents, the matter had been triaged and recorded as "less urgent" than other matters the force needed to deal with.

He said that a computer check had been done after the report, which confirmed the Seat was registered to Couzens, and gave his address. There was "no standard check" to see whether suspects in criminal cases were police officers, he added.

Lee attended the restaurant on the afternoon of 3 March 2021. It was her last appointment of the day. "We suggest that the work carried out was a rushed job," Ozin said. He added that the manager claimed to have explained to Lee that while the drive-through CCTV deleted automatically, other CCTV footage showed Couzens' car. The manager claimed that he showed her the other CCTV.

In a report made after her visit, Lee recommended that Couzens be arrested and questioned. Ozin said that Lee claimed that she believed that the report would be allocated to a different team to follow up on.

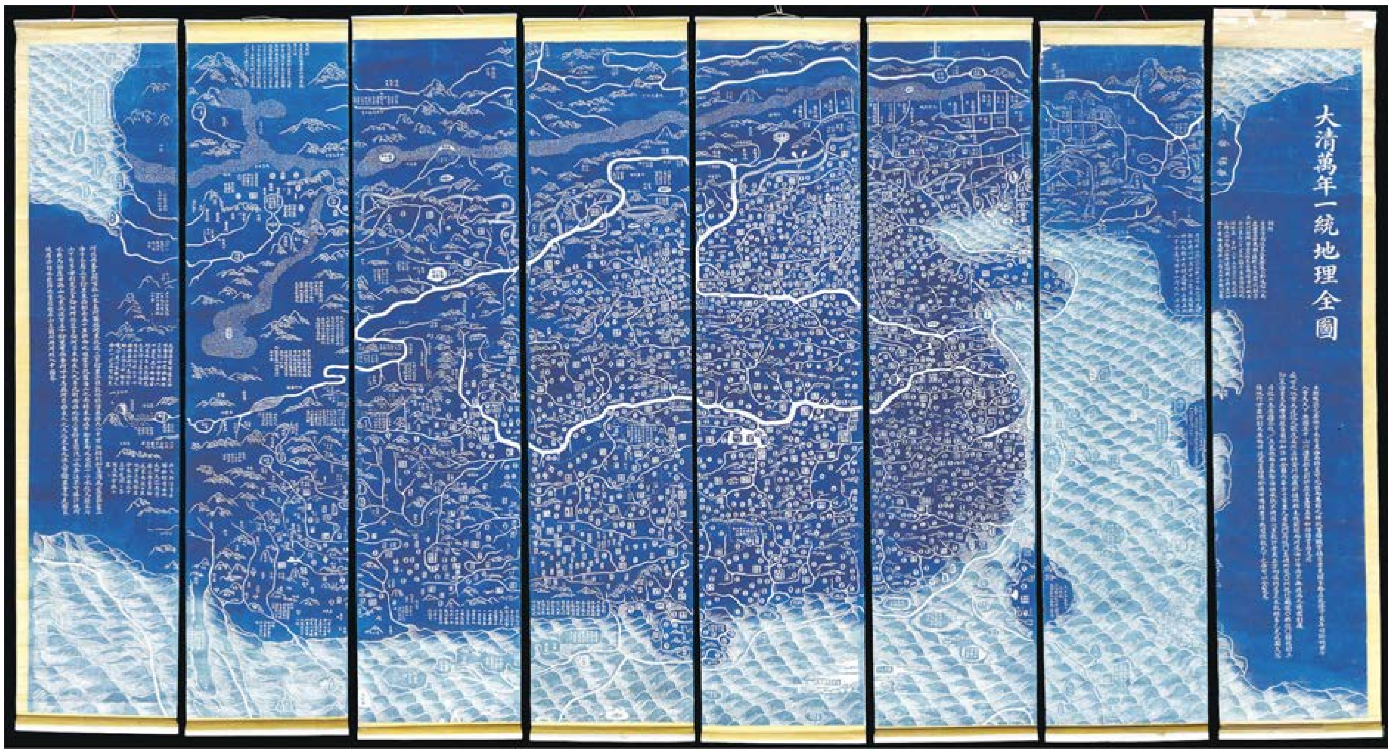
However, Ozin said that she did not put the witness statements and the receipts in a sealed evidence bag, instead keeping them in her pocket.

He added that Lee's behaviour "is supportive of the unpalatable conclusion that [she] just did not bother to get the CCTV, even though she knew it was important".

The charge against Lee alleges she "failed to undertake the correct investigative inquiries into an allegation of indecent exposure" and "provided a misleading account of her actions when questioned".

If she is found to have committed gross misconduct, Lee could be banned from serving in the force again. The misconduct hearing at Palestra House in Southwark, London, is expected to last seven days.





◀ *Complete Map of All Under Heaven Unified by the Great Qing, c1800*
PHOTOGRAPH: BRITISH LIBRARY

> *It's a heady experience to enter the heavily ritualised ambience of the emperor's inner circle*

Art review

China's secrets make a spellbinding show

China's Hidden Century
British Museum, London
★★★★★

Jonathan Jones

In 1860, British and French troops pillaged and destroyed the Summer Palace of China's Qing emperors, carrying off pieces of art and chunks of architecture - and a tiny, hairy dog who belonged to the emperor. Looty, as the dog was renamed with impeccable bad taste, was given to Queen Victoria and was the first pekingese in Britain.

A portrait of Looty is one of the many arresting images and facts in what must be the strangest blockbuster the British Museum has ever staged. In 2007, this museum put on a show about China's first emperor. China's Hidden Century takes the story up to the last emperor - the child ruler Aisin-Gioro Puyi, deposed by a revolution in 1912. Yet in the closed world of the 19th-century imperial court, recreated here, it seemed nothing had changed for centuries. It's a heady experience to enter the heavily ritualised ambience of the emperor's inner circle. The clothes alone are incredible works of art: gowns and dresses intricately decorated with butterflies, filigree patterns, dragons. There's a dress that belonged to the Empress Dowager Cixi, who in effect ruled China from 1861 to 1908 and changed her glittering apparel several times a day: nearby are costumes and wall hangings from the operas performed at court. It's hard to tell opera from reality, so formalised was everyday life.

In 1911, the Chinese court sent two colossal vases, decorated with golden dragons in swirling blue, as coronation presents for George V. Their size is an act of assertion: China's empire still defined itself as "all under heaven". But this exhibition shows in pitiless detail how far the court's view of itself had strayed from reality.

Britain plays a stunningly cynical part in the story of imperial China's final decline and dissolution. A lithograph published in 1851, the year of the Great Exhibition that celebrated Victorian capitalist triumph, shows a cavernous depository stacked to the ceiling with goods for export; it's proudly titled: "A busy stacking room in the opium factory at Patna, India." The East India Company was producing opium in India specifically for export to China. China's senior administrator Lin Zexu, portrayed here philosophically drinking wine in the countryside, but fingering a sword, wrote to Queen Victoria in 1838 complaining about the British drug trade's devastating impact on China's addicted elite. Britain responded by sending the fleet.



Waterproofs for a worker, 1800-60, southern China

The first and second opium wars - it was in the second that the Summer Palace was looted - were the first direct military faceoffs between China's time-hallowed civilisation and the industrial, upstart west. It was a foregone conclusion. Portraits, armour and weapons of "bannermen", the elite of the Qing imperial army, resemble glorious props from a martial arts epic set in the 11th century.

But it was an older import, Christianity, that unleashed the most devastating cataclysm of 19th-century China, inspiring Hong Xiuquan, a village school teacher, to declare that he was the brother of Christ and make himself Heavenly King; in 1851, he led his Taiping Heavenly Kingdom to war against the Qing. "Christ and I were begotten by the Father," affirms Hong Xiuquan in his own correction of a British missionary's letter on view here. A propaganda print shows the imperial army finally defeating the Taiping rebel capital, Nanjing, in 1864; their leader is depicted running away but in reality he was already dead. His remains were dug up and fired out of a cannon. Twenty million people died in the Taiping rebellion, the bloodiest civil war in world history.

This show is atmospherically designed as a shadowy labyrinth, in which you discover one clue after another to an often shocking history. The curators try to end on an optimistic note. We meet the poet and revolutionary Qiu Jin, executed in 1907, who became a martyr for the new century. She's projected on a cinematic scale as the face of the future.

This dumbfounding exhibition shows modern history to be as thrilling and mysterious as the ancient past, but a lot more worrying.

From Thursday until 8 October



Offer ends 15/06/23. Subject to status and credit check. New customers only. £10 upfront payment. £40 per month (pm) includes 43" Sky Glass £14pm on a 48-month interest free loan and Sky Ultimate TV subscription (Sky Entertainment and Netflix basic) £26pm from month 4. 18-month minimum term on Sky Ultimate TV. Prices subject to change. Offer available when purchasing Sky Glass without a loan. All content on Sky Glass is streamed via broadband, minimum speed of 25Mbps required. Energy Rating G on a scale of A -G. 18+. UK, CI, IoM residential customers only. Separate terms and conditions apply to Sky Glass and Sky TV subscriptions. You own Sky Glass. Ongoing monthly prices and content subject to change. Streaming TV account required, manage online at sky.com or via the MySky app. Email address required for account login. If you do not activate within 14 days of receiving Sky Glass, we will automatically activate it for you and you will be billed from activation. Use of your Streaming TV subscription on your Sky Glass outside of your home address, may incur additional charges. See 'Your Streaming TV subscription' contract for more details. Only one Sky TV subscription per address, so existing Sky Q or Sky+ customers will need to take a new TV subscription and contract. Selection of content/shows/series available and varies each month. Includes Netflix basic plan (RRP: £6.99). Netflix Terms of Use Apply. Access to Discovery+ at no additional cost for the duration of your Sky TV subscription on Sky Glass (required).

Genomics the key to tackling new diseases, says UKHSA

Ian Sample
Science editor

Health officials have drawn up plans for a "genomics transformation" aimed at detecting and dealing with outbreaks of infectious diseases faster and more effectively.

Information gleaned from the genetics of Covid proved crucial as the virus swept the globe, revealing how the pathogen spread, evolved and responded to vaccines and medicines developed to protect people.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) now aims to build on the pandemic's lessons by embedding genomics into routine public health practice. This is intended to bolster surveillance for outbreaks, drive down cases of infections such as TB, measles, hepatitis C and HIV/Aids, and predict the course of future threats such as avian flu and diseases borne by mosquitoes and ticks as they gain ground in a warming climate.

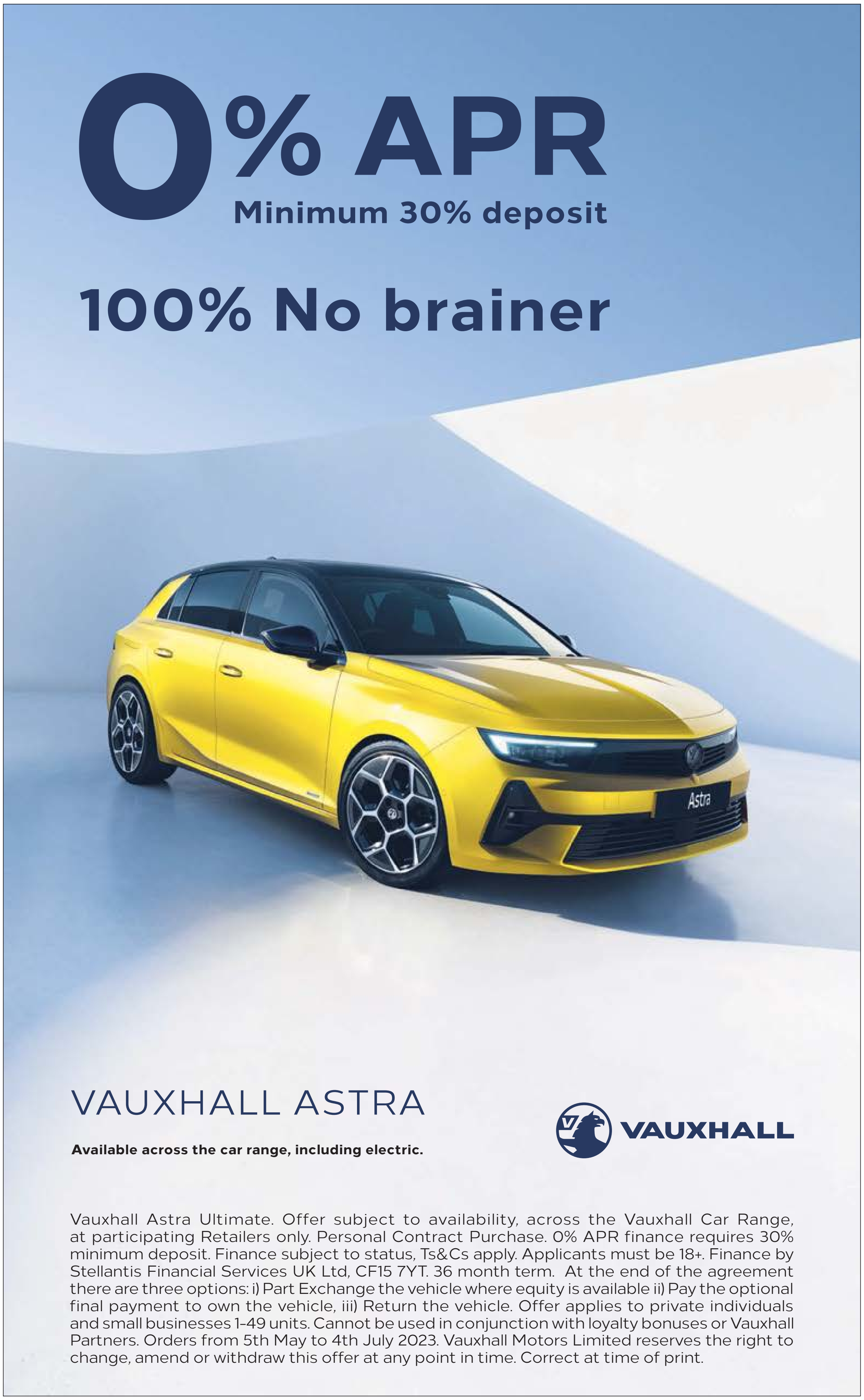
"We changed our thinking about genomics during Covid," said Dr Meera Chand, the UKHSA director of clinical and emerging infection.

"It's not that we need to generate huge numbers of genomes all the time, it's that we can use the data to change what we're doing."

Genomics is central to the UKHSA's 10-year science strategy released today. Among the plans covering infections, radiation protection, the impact of the climate crisis and vaccine development is a commitment to have diagnostic tests, drugs and vaccines ready to deploy within 100 days of a pandemic threat emerging.

One way of detecting outbreaks early is to monitor the genomes of viruses and bacteria circulating in the population. Any sharp shift in the normal pattern of a pathogens can flag that a particular strain is surging. The same approach can highlight when infections belong to a cluster.

According to the UKHSA strategy, humans have been hit by more than 330 new and emerging infectious diseases since the 1940s, nearly two thirds of which appear to have spread from animals. The likelihood of more coming after Covid, Sars, Mers and Mpox is increasing, the report adds, given the greater contact between humans and animals and the ease of spread via global trade and travel.



British man tells Cyprus trial his wife begged him to end her life

Helena Smith
Paphos

A euthanasia case that has gripped Cyprus for more than a year has entered its final phase as a British man accused of murdering his cancer-stricken wife described how she "begged" him to put her out of the excruciating pain that had made her life unbearable.

In evidence before a three-member tribunal in Paphos yesterday, David Hunter, 76, described the circumstances that led him, in the run-up to Christmas 2021, to fatally smother Janice, his sweetheart since they were teenagers.

"For six weeks, every day she begged me," the former miner told the district court in Paphos, a resort town in the island's south-west popular with British emigrants.

"I would never have helped her end her life if she hadn't begged me," he said, his voice cracking with emotion as he recalled the moment he took her head in his hands and, blocking her mouth and nose, pressed hard until, drained of oxygen, her face turned grey. " I didn't want to. I had lived with her for 57 years. She wasn't just my wife. She was my best friend."

The Briton, who stands accused of premeditated murder on a Mediterranean island where euthanasia is vehemently opposed by the Orthodox Church, spoke of his struggle to persuade Janice, 74, "to give it time" in the hope that she would stop pleading with him to end a life destroyed by the devastating effects of leukaemia.

But in the six weeks before her death, Hunter said his wife had become increasingly desperate.

"She was sick of all the treatment, she was sick of life … she was full of pain," said Hunter.

"I don't remember a lot of the last day. I went to make a cup of coffee and she started crying. The next thing I knew I put my hands on her … when it was finished, she was a grey colour. She didn't look like my wife, and it was the first time I cried in many years."

Hunter, who attempted to kill himself soon after, has never denied his role in his wife's death. But the lack of a written note, or any other evidence, has been pivotal in the court deciding that Hunter acted on his own accord, with judges rejecting a defence plea to reduce the charge from premeditated murder to manslaughter.

Hunter acknowledged he should have made clear that he had "helped" Janice end her life in what in other EU member states would be considered assisted suicide.

The trial continues.



David Hunter told the court how he fatally smothered his wife, Janice

BBC Westwood inquiry receives 'important new information'

Emine Sinmaz

A BBC inquiry into what the corporation knew about allegations of sexual misconduct against the DJ Tim Westwood has received significant new information.

The independent review team, led by Gemma White KC, had opened a confidential phone line (0800 0121 838) to "expand the ways in which people can come forward".

White said yesterday that the phone line would close as planned on Friday and that the inquiry had received a "significant amount of important new information".

Last year, a joint investigation by the Guardian and BBC News published allegations of sexual misconduct and predatory behaviour made by several women against Westwood.

The presenter, who denied the allegations, then stepped down from his radio show on Capital Xtra.

The BBC appointed White last August after an internal review found the corporation may have missed chances to explore concerns raised against Westwood, who was a DJ at BBC Radio 1 from 1994 to 2013.

The inquiry, which has reportedly already seen more than 50,000 BBC documents, is expected to publish its findings in the summer.

▼ *A marine biologist checks a coral reef near Fiji. Ocean heating has bleached reefs around the world*
PHOTOGRAPH: MARK CONLIN/VW/UIG/GETTY



'A huge payback'

How climate crisis is being fuelled by warming oceans



◀ *The oceans are absorbing more than 90% of the extra energy from climate change, which has lulled people into a false sense of security, experts say*

Graham Readfearn

By the end of March, the surface temperature of the world's oceans was above anything seen in the 40 years that satellites have been measuring it.

Records were "headed off the charts" and, as the heat refused to fade for more than a month, the Earth entered "uncharted territory", scientists said.

The temperature at the ocean's surface - like that on land - is being pushed higher by global heating, but can jump around from one year to the next as weather systems come and go.

But in the 1.2 miles (2km) below the surface, that variability is almost nowhere to be seen. The rising heat down there has been on a relentless climb for decades, thanks to burning fossil fuels.

"The heat-holding capacity of the ocean is mammoth," says Dr Paul Durack, a research scientist specialising in ocean measurements and modelling at the US Department of Energy's Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. "The ocean captures more than 90% of the imbalance of energy that we're creating because of anthropogenic climate change."

The ocean is much less reflective than the land and soaks up more of the direct energy from sunlight.

But as greenhouse gases trap more of the energy that's reflected - allowing less to escape to space - the ocean tries to balance itself with the heat in the atmosphere above. The latest UN climate assessment laid out the heat gain. Between 1971 and 2018, the ocean had gained 396 zettajoules of heat.

How much is that? Scientists have calculated it is equivalent to the energy of more than 25bn Hiroshima atomic bombs. And that heat gain is accelerating.

A study in January found the ocean gained 10ZJ more in 2022 - enough heat to boil 700m 1.5-litre kettles every second for a year.

Compared with the ocean, according to a study in January, the atmosphere has held on to about 2% of the extra heat caused by global heating since 2006.

To understand what's happening below the ocean surface, out of sight of satellites, scientists look at a vast network of thermometers on buoys, ships and permanent moorings.

Durack says it wasn't until the early 2000s that a view of the changes in the ocean - long predicted by climate scientists - started to become clear as more and more data became available.

25bn

Number of Hiroshima atomic bombs equivalent to the 396 zettajoules of heat gained by the oceans since 1971

But climate models can go back further. "When we look at the climate models and compare them with the observations, we get consistent results across that simulated Earth and the real Earth. They're all showing consistent warming," says Durack.

Dr Bernadette Sloyan researches changes in the ocean at Australia's CSIRO government science agency.

"The ocean is like a flywheel that drives our climate and that's all because of the amount of energy it takes to heat it up," she says. "We have this constant talking between the ocean and the atmosphere that's driving our weather and, annually, that's our climate."

Sloyan says the ocean has acted like an air conditioner, relentlessly absorbing extra heat. "But that air conditioner isn't just passive. It is not a free service. Adding that heat has come with ocean acidification, rising sea levels and changes in the frequency of extreme weather," she says.

The effects of the extra heat are almost everywhere. As the ocean heats, it expands, pushing up sea levels. Just over one-third of the rise in global sea levels is down to thermal expansion.

More heat means more marine heatwaves, which have devastated marine ecosystems, causing bleaching on coral reefs and killing underwater plants that provide habitats for marine life.

Ocean heating could also radically alter marine food webs, with warmer conditions favouring smaller species and algae at the expense of the larger species that humans tend to eat. At the tropics, where oceans are warmest, species are already migrating towards the poles to find cooler waters. But with no other species able to take their place, this leaves waters stripped of marine life.

In places like the Mediterranean, where land blocks a route to cooler waters, Prof David Schoeman says many species will run out of ocean.

"Fish can't just climb out of the water, so they may have to go deeper," says Schoeman, of the University of the Sunshine Coast in Australia, who helped coordinate the latest UN climate assessment's work on the ocean.

But if species go deeper to survive the heat, this could present another problem. Near the surface, Schoeman says, waters easily mix with the air to provide enough oxygen for marine life. But as deeper waters warm, they hold less oxygen, potentially cutting off another survival option.

Schoeman says much of the heat that has pushed surface temperatures to new highs in recent weeks is probably coming from below. "Every year, about 134m atomic bombs of heat is being trapped by the ocean. It has kept global temperatures down and kept the land livable, but we have to realise that energy hasn't gone."

The latest UN climate report says the warming of the ocean is likely to continue "until at least 2300" even if greenhouse gas emissions are low, because of the "slow circulation of the deep ocean".

Prof Matthew England, an oceanographer and climate scientist at the University of New South Wales, says: "Remember the world is 70% covered by ocean. It should have been called Ocean, not Earth." Simple physics, he says, means the ocean "has this huge ability to absorb heat and then hold on to it".

To heat one cubic metre of air by 1C, he says, takes about 2,000 joules. But a cubic metre of ocean needs about 4,200,000 joules. "By absorbing all this heat, the ocean lulls people into a false sense of security that climate change is progressing slowly," he says. "But there is a huge payback ... there's sea level rise, coastal inundation, increased floods and drought cycles, bleached corals, intensification of cyclones, ecological impacts, melting of ice at higher latitudes in the coastal margins - that gives us a double whammy on sea level rise.

"The oceans have stored the problem. But it's coming back to bite us."

North Falls Offshore Wind Farm

Section 48 Planning Act 2008

Regulation 4 of the Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009

Notice is hereby given that North Falls Offshore Wind Farm Limited (company number 12435947) with registered office at Windmill Hill Business Park, Whitehill Way, Swindon, Wiltshire SN5 6PB (the "Applicant") intends to make an application to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero under Section 37 of the Planning Act 2008 for development consent (the "Application") for North Falls Offshore Wind Farm ("North Falls").

North Falls is a nationally significant infrastructure project being developed in an equal joint venture partnership by SSE Renewables and RWE, via the Applicant company. North Falls is a proposed offshore wind farm located in the southern North Sea, approximately 20 kilometres from the East Anglia coast at its nearest point. An offer has been accepted from National Grid for an onshore grid connection in Tendring, North Essex, approximately 24 kilometres from the coast near Frinton-on-Sea, the likely landfall location for that connection option. North Falls is set to support the UK's target of 50GW of installed offshore wind capacity by 2030. North Falls comprises:

- Up to 72 offshore wind turbine generators
- Up to two offshore substation platforms
- Platform interconnector cables
- Inter-array cables
- Three options for transmission infrastructure:

Option 1: Onshore electrical connection at a National Grid connection point within Tendring, Essex, with a project alone onshore cable route and onshore substation infrastructure;

Option 2: Onshore electrical connection at a National Grid connection point within Tendring, Essex, sharing all or part of an onshore cable route with separate onshore export cables with another project (such as Five Estuaries) where practicable, or

Option 3: Offshore electrical connection supplied by a third-party electricity network provider. Such a connection will potentially be identified through the Offshore Transmission Network Review (OTNR) process.

It is anticipated the proposed development consent order (DCO) will, among other things, authorise:

- The construction, operation and maintenance and decommissioning of an offshore wind generating station and its associated infrastructure
- The compulsory acquisition of land including rights in or over land and imposition of restrictions, powers to override suspend or extinguish rights over land and the temporary use of land
- The application, modification and/or disapplication of legislation relevant to the Project including that relating to the compulsory acquisition of land, and
- Such ancillary, incidental and consequential provisions, licences, property rights, permits and consents as are necessary and/or convenient.

As North Falls is an offshore generating station with a proposed capacity of more than 100MW it is classified as a nationally significant infrastructure project under s15(3) Planning Act 2008. North Falls is an environmental impact assessment (EIA) development as defined in the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. Therefore, the Applicant is making preliminary environmental information available and the proposed application for a DCO will be accompanied by an Environmental Statement.

From the start of the statutory consultation on 16 May 2023, the North Falls Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR), a non-technical summary (NTS) providing an overview of the proposals, consultation booklet and other documents, plans and maps showing the nature and location of the project will be available to view and download free of charge via the consultation portal **(https://stat.northfallsoffshore.com/)**. The consultation portal can also be accessed from the website **(www.northfallsoffshore.com)**.

The documents, plans and maps will all be available online for at least the duration of the statutory consultation period ending at 11.59pm on 14 July 2023. Alternatively, copies of the documents can be requested by calling **0800 254 5340** or by emailing **contact@northfallsoffshore.com**. These contact details can also be used for any enquiries relating to the documents, plans and maps accompanying this consultation.

Electronic copies of the documents on a USB stick can be requested free of charge along with paper copies of the NTS, consultation booklet and previously published statement of community consultation (SoCC). However due to the size of the PEIR, a charge of £3500 would be applied for a paper copy, to cover the production costs. Paper copies of all the consultation documents – including the PEIR - will be available to view at the following drop-in consultation events:

Venue	Date (2023):	Time:
Great Bromley Village Hall Parsons Hill, Great Bromley, Colchester, CO7 7JA	Friday 2 June	3.30pm to 7.30pm
Tendring Village Hall Tendring Clacton-on-Sea, CO16 0BG	Saturday 3 June	9am to 1pm
McGrigor Hall 85 Fourth Ave, Frinton-on-Sea, CO13 9EB	Thursday 8 June	3.30pm to 7.30pm
Thorpe-le-Soken Women's Institute Hall High Street, Thorpe-le-Soken, CO16 0EF	Friday 9 June	9am to 1pm
Ardleigh Village Hall Station Road, Ardleigh, Essex, CO7 7RS	Saturday 10 June	9am to 1pm

As part of the consultation there will also be two online webinars which require registration in advance. Details of how to register can be found on the consultation portal:

Webinar (Zoom)	Tuesday 13 June	6pm to 7:30pm
Webinar (Zoom)	Wednesday 21 June	6pm to 7:30pm

Responses can be submitted via a feedback form or the interactive map on the project consultation portal **(https://stat.northfallsoffshore.com/);** via feedback forms or postcards available at the consultation events; by email contact@northfallsoffshore.com, or in writing to **FREEPOST NORTH FALLS**. Any responses related to North Falls statutory consultation should be received by the Applicant by **11.59pm on 14 July 2023.**

Please note that representations received and any accompanying personal data, such as the names of persons over 18, may be made public. Those not wishing their personal information to be made public should state so when submitting their representation. Responses and personal data may be provided to the Secretary of State, the Planning Inspectorate or other relevant statutory authorities in accordance with the requirements of the Planning Act 2008. To find out about how the Applicant will manage your personal data please refer to our Privacy Notice (https://stat.northfallsoffshore.com/privacy)

Awkward vibes
Why Americans put on British accents
Page 24

'Too much violence'
Serbia divided after mass shootings
Page 25



World



The Move Forward leader, Pita Limjaroenrat, second from right, parades through Bangkok yesterday
PHOTOGRAPH: RUNGROJ YONGRIT/EPA

Thai opposition parties agree to form coalition after 'staggering' poll result

Rebecca Ratcliffe
South-east Asia correspondent

Thailand's opposition parties have secured by far the largest number of votes in national elections, delivering a damning verdict to the military-backed government that has ruled the country for nearly a decade.

Move Forward, a progressive party popular with young Thais that surpassed expectations by winning the most votes and seats, said yesterday it was ready to form a government. Its leader, Pita Limjaroenrat, said he had invited Pheu Thai, the party associated with the exiled former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra, and four other opposition parties to form an alliance.

"I am Pita Limjaroenrat, the next prime minister of Thailand," he told reporters in Bangkok, vowing to be a "prime minister for all".

Pheu Thai later confirmed it had agreed to the proposal to form an opposition coalition.

For any of the opposition parties to take power they will need to form a coalition that has numbers strong enough to pass through a system weighted in favour of military-backed candidates.

A future prime minister will be voted on not just by the 500-seat house of representatives, whose membership is dictated by the election results, but also by the senate, whose 250 members were appointed by the military after the last coup. It is unclear if senators' votes will reflect the will of the people, especially given Move Forward's ambition to reform Thailand's lese-majesty law.

Pita warned of a "hefty price" to pay if interference in the election outcome led to the formation of a minority government.

The Election Commission chair, Ittiporn Boonpracong, said the Move Forward party had secured 151 of 500 available seats, while Pheu Thai had 141 seats. The results need to be confirmed before they are declared official, which will happen within 60 days. He said voter turnout was the highest on record, at 75.22%.

Prayuth Chan-ocha, a former army chief who first came to power in a coup in 2014 and who had run a staunchly nationalist campaign, was trailing far behind with 36 seats. However, he is still in the running to be prime minister if he can cobble together a coalition.

Move Forward shocked even some of its own supporters by outperforming expectations on Sunday. Throughout the count, it was neck-and-neck with Pheu Thai, which had been aiming to win by a landslide.

Parties linked to the Shinawatra family have proved unbeatable at the ballot box, winning the most seats in every election since 2001.

Thitinan Pongsudhirak, a professor at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, described the results as "staggering" and "historic". Pheu Thai had campaigned using its old approach of populist policies, he said, but added: "Move Forward takes the game to the next level with institutional reform. That's the new battleground in Thai politics."

This was the first election in which the lese-majesty law was openly discussed by candidates – a change brought about by the 2020 youth-led mass protests where activists risked jail to call for the influence and wealth of the monarchy to be curbed.

Move Forward, whose own candidates have been charged under the law, is the only party to make a clear commitment to reforming it. Pheu Thai said the matter should be discussed in parliament but was strongly opposed to the law being scrapped, while Conservative parties all fiercely oppose any change.

A joint session of parliament will be held in July to select the next prime minister.

Additional reporting
Reuters and Agence France-Presse

Monarchy Lese-majesty debate may have boosted opposition

Rebecca Ratcliffe
Bangkok

Just a few years ago, talking publicly about the status or role of Thailand's monarchy was taboo. But on Sunday night, a political party that had campaigned for reform of strict laws that shield the royal family from criticism came out on top in a general election, winning the most votes and seats, according to an unofficial count.

Napon Jatusripitak, a visiting fellow at the ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, said it was an "extremely significant" moment. "They have the popular mandate – 14 million people voted for this party. And, of course, the party will proclaim this as a sign that Thailand has some readiness for more extensive structural reforms, no matter the institution."

According to the constitution, the monarchy is held in "revered worship", and shielded from criticism by one of the world's strictest lese-majesty laws. Saying anything deemed critical or offensive to the king, even in satire, can mean up to 15 years in prison.

But for the first time, the lese-majesty law was discussed by political parties in the run-up to an election, and Move Forward, which won the popular vote, is the only party that committed to reforming the law.

An unprecedented youth movement took to the streets in 2020 to challenge that law and to call for the royal budget to be reduced and the monarchy's political influence curbed. More than 240 people have since been charged with lese-majesty offences ranging from Facebook posts to fancy dress. Protesters have often been bailed out by Move Forward's politicians, and some became candidates and won seats.

Pavin Chachavalpongpun, a professor and monarchy critic who lives in exile, described the election results as a "big turning point in Thailand's political landscape". He added that implementing changes to the law would be difficult, given that Move Forward does not have a majority government.

Move Forward's predecessor, Future Forward, was shut down by the constitutional court in 2020, and Move Forward's supporters fear legal cases could be weaponised against it. An activist who goes by the name Sainam said that even with Move Forward's strong numbers, its opponents could find ways to undermine it. "I hope democracy will win, but anything can happen," he said as he watched the results on Sunday.

The election results were a devastating blow for the prime minister, Prayuth Chan-ocha, a former army chief who first took power in a coup in 2014, and styled himself as the protector of conservative Thai values. His party, however, performed poorly, and came behind both Move Forward and the opposition party Pheu Thai.

Eyewitness

Bafta TV awards 2023
Luminaries of the small screen crammed into the Royal Festival Hall in London on Sunday night for Britain's premier TV industry awards. The Guardian's **Sarah Lee** mingled with the arrivals in the glorious sunshine before going backstage to capture the more intimate moments of the ceremony





Claudia Winkleman and the Bafta-winning team behind the hit reality show The Traitors are among those captured in this exuberant group shot



▼ *Lesley Manville, seen here with Sherwood co-star David Morrissey, was nominated for best supporting actress for her role in the BBC drama*



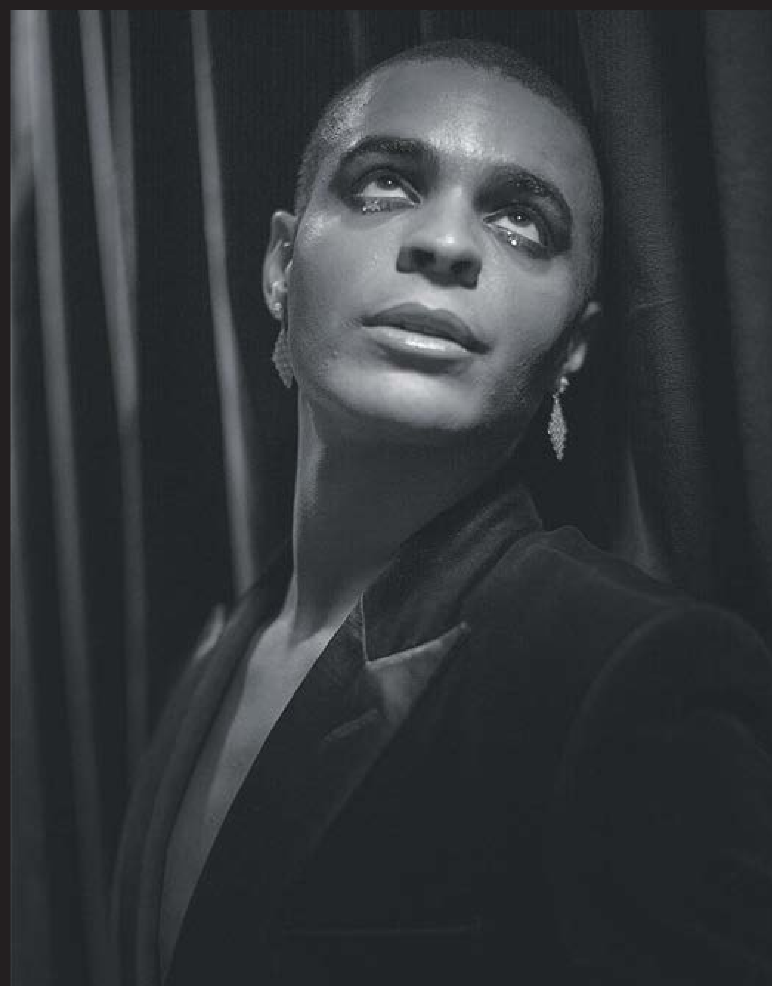
▼ *Adeel Akhtar won the Bafta for best supporting actor for his role as Andy Fisher in Sherwood, the BBC One drama about post-Brexit Britain*



▼ *Daisy May Cooper, nominated for best female performance in a comedy programme for the BBC's Am I Being Unreasonable?, arrives*







▲ *The star of BBC One's Ghosts, Kiell Smith-Bynoe, on the red carpet. The show was nominated for best scripted comedy*

▲ *Layton Williams, the star of Bad Education on TV and Everybody's Talking About Jamie on stage, glams it up at the Baftas*



◀ *Actor David Harewood, right, with Munya Chawawa, who was nominated in the specialist factual category for Channel 4's How to Survive a Dictator*



◀ *Claudia Winkleman, centre, with her entertainment performance Bafta for hosting the BBC's The Traitors, flanked by RuPaul's Drag Race judge Michelle Visage, left, and Radio 1 presenter Clara Amfo*



▼ *Ukrainian soldiers direct artillery fire at Russian positions near the eastern city of Bakhmut yesterday* PHOTOGRAPH: AP

Kyiv launches fresh missile assaults on targets deep behind Russian lines

Luke Harding
Kyiv

Ukraine carried out fresh strikes on Russian forces yesterday, apparently targeting command and control centres deep behind enemy lines ahead of its long-awaited counter-offensive, with explosions reported in the occupied city of Luhansk.

Smoke was seen rising above a former aviation school in the eastern city used by the Russian military. Moscow-installed officials said Kyiv had carried out the attack with two Storm Shadow long-range missiles supplied by the UK. An administrative building was damaged, they said.

The strike follows a similar attack on Saturday in Luhansk that destroyed a multi-storey building and wounded a Russian MP. Russian state media showed fragments it claimed had come from missiles.

There was a further explosion yesterday in the city centre. The blast took place in a crowded barber's shop. The Luhansk interior minister, Major Gen Igor Kornet, was seriously wounded, apparently while getting his hair cut. One person was killed and five others injured.

Luhansk – in effect controlled by Russia since 2014 – had been relatively peaceful since Vladimir Putin's invasion last year. The provision of Storm Shadow missiles, which have a range in excess of 155 miles (250km), means it is suddenly vulnerable, together with Russian bases and arms depots well away from the frontline.

Yesterday the Kremlin said for the first time it had shot down one of the air-launched British cruise missiles, together with other western-supplied rockets. There was no independent verification of the claim. Storm Shadow missiles are hard to detect and carry a 500kg warhead.

In recent days, Ukrainian commanders have been carrying out tactical "shaping" operations across a 900-mile frontline that runs from Kherson province in the south to the Luhansk and Donetsk regions in the east. They have been systematically destroying enemy artillery systems and armoured vehicles, often in nighttime missions using drones.

The latest attacks on Luhansk suggest Kyiv is simultaneously targeting Russian command and control centres ahead of a counter-offensive expected this summer. The apparent plan is to degrade Russia's battlefield potential before an advance by newly formed battalions equipped with western main battle tanks.

Ukraine's long-range strike capability is a growing problem for Moscow's military command. Vladimir Putin's spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov, said Russia took an "extremely negative" view of the UK's decision to give Kyiv more military hardware, including long-range attack drones announced during Volodymyr Zelenskiy's visit to the UK yesterday, when he met Rishi Sunak at Chequers.

Russia's general staff experienced a similar strategic setback last summer when the US gave truck-mounted multiple rocket launchers with a 50-mile range to Kyiv. These precision Himars systems were used to blow up bridges over the Dnipro River in southern Ukraine, forcing Moscow to abandon the city of Kherson, and to retreat from the right to the left bank.

Writing on Telegram, Igor Girkin – a far-right nationalist and former Russian intelligence colonel – said the delivery of Storm Shadows "can seriously affect the situation at the front. They can hit headquarters, ammunition depots and personal quarters in our deep rear." He said electronic warfare did not work against them.

Last week Ukrainian troops recaptured more than 10 sq miles of territory around the eastern city of Bakhmut. There were reports of continued street fighting in the city centre yesterday, with Russian infantry units and mercenaries from the Wagner group attempting to storm Ukrainian positions in the west of Bakhmut.



▲ *As the fighting intensifies farther south, people in Kyiv visit a park to see lilacs in bloom yesterday* PHOTOGRAPH: OLEKSII CHUMACHENKO/ANADOLU AGENCY/GETTY

Belarus
Lukashenko photo released after rumours of ill health

Shaun Walker
Warsaw

Belarusian authorities have released a photograph and video of Alexander Lukashenko, attempting to put an end to a week of speculation about the authoritarian leader's health.

The footage showed Lukashenko visiting an army control point, but the dictator's heavily bandaged arm and hoarse, exhausted voice appeared to confirm rumours that he has been in poor health.

Lukashenko had not been seen in public since last Tuesday, when he attended a military parade in Moscow, with rumours he had been admitted to hospital on his return to Minsk.

The opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, who fled the country after a ruthless crackdown on opponents in 2020, told her supporters yesterday to be "well prepared for every scenario".

Shortly after, a Telegram channel linked to Lukashenko released a photograph of him, apparently visiting a military command centre, dressed in military fatigues and with his left arm heavily bandaged. Later, the channel released video footage of Lukashenko, apparently from the same visit, holding a meeting about the security situation in the country.

Lukashenko has ruled Belarus since 1994. A former collective farm manager, he has often been referred to as "the last dictator in Europe" and his regime took an even more repressive turn after mass protests in 2020.

Tsikhanouskaya ran against Lukashenko in elections that year, which were widely seen as rigged. Her husband had been barred from standing in the election and jailed. After the vote, Lukashenko's security forces eventually crushed the huge protest movements, with widespread arrests, violence and many Belarusians leaving the country.

"There are many rumours about the dictator Lukashenko's health," Tsikhanouskaya tweeted to supporters yesterday. "For us, it means only one thing: we should be well prepared for every scenario. To turn Belarus on the path to democracy and to prevent Russia from interfering. We need the international community to be proactive and fast."



▲ *An official photograph showing Alexander Lukashenko apparently visiting a military command centre*

Six dead and several missing after fire at New Zealand hostel

Tess McClure
Auckland

At least six people died and others were missing after a "worst nightmare" fire at a 92-room hostel in New Zealand last night.

The Loafers Lodge hostel in Newtown, in Wellington's south, caught alight overnight, prompting an evacuation. The prime minister, Chris Hipkins, said at least six had died.

"I understand six confirmed previously and it looks like there are likely to be more," he said.

Police said their initial assessment was that the number of deceased "is fewer than 10, however, we are not in a position to be any more specific until we can access the building".

Wellington's fire and emergency department said "a number of people" were unaccounted for.

A housing crisis in New Zealand means a growing number of homeless people are housed long-term by the government in motels and hostels, of which this was one.

More than 3,300 households currently live in emergency housing - typically motels - the nation's ministry for social development said in February. This total includes more than 3,000 children. Another 29,000 people who needed public housing were still on waiting lists.

"This is a tragic event for all involved," the fire and emergency district manager, Nick Pyatt, said. "My heartfelt condolences go to the loved ones of those who have lost their lives.

"It doesn't get worse than this. This is a once-in-a-decade fire for Wellington. It's the worst nightmare for us. Our thoughts at this time are with the families of those who have perished and with our crews who valiantly rescued those [they could] and attempted to rescue those that they couldn't."

A total of 52 people were taken out



▲ *Fire damage is visible on the top floor of the hostel in Wellington*

of the building after the alarm was raised about the blaze at 12.25am local time. More than 10 fire vehicles responded to the emergency across the morning and the fire was put out after 6am.

Hipkins said: "It's a really concerning development and obviously our thoughts are with all the firefighters involved and all the victims of the terrible tragedy that's unfolding."

There were no vacancies in the accommodation complex, except for a number of rooms being treated for bedbugs, Radio NZ reported.

Wellington city council spokesman Richard MacLean said the local authority was helping about 50 people who had escaped the fire and were now at an emergency centre the council had set up at a local running track, which had showers and other facilities.

He said that council staff were helping a number of elderly people who had escaped from the fire with only the pyjamas they were wearing.

"A lot are clearly shaken and bewildered about what happened," he said.

Additional reporting **AP**

The scenic route
A winding road takes on extra colour as oilseed rape fields flower near Nienstedt, in Lower Saxony, Germany.

PHOTOGRAPH: JULIAN STRATENSCHULTE/ AVALON



Leading Swiss academic faces Geneva court over rape charges

Angelique Chrisafis
Paris

The prominent Swiss academic and scholar of Islam Tariq Ramadan has gone on trial in Geneva on charges of rape and sexual coercion.

The 60-year-old told the court he denied allegations that he had carried out an attack on a Swiss woman in a Geneva hotel in 2008.

Ramadan was a professor of contemporary Islamic studies at the University of Oxford before taking a leave of absence in 2017 when rape allegations were first made against him by French women, in what was seen as the biggest repercussion of the #MeToo movement in France. He has also denied those allegations.

The complainant in the Swiss case, who had converted to Islam in her youth, was 40 at the time of the alleged attack. She said she has faced threats and therefore wished to be known under the assumed name of Brigitte during the trial.

She said she had met Ramadan at a book signing in Geneva and later at a conference. They had corresponded via social media. A few months later he had invited her for coffee at his hotel after a conference. Ramadan is charged with three counts of rape against Brigitte in his hotel room on 28 October 2008, and one count of sexual coercion. Ramadan is accused of subjecting her to brutal sexual acts as well as beatings and insults.

Ramadan, who could face up to 10 years in prison, denies all charges and told the court he was innocent. He said: "I'm here because I'm going to fight," and denounced what he called "lies and manipulation" against him.

He told the court he was receiving a monthly payment from Oxford.

"This trial is an ordeal for my client, not therapy," the Swiss complainant's French lawyer, François Zimeray, told AFP.

"She is waiting for recognition of the suffering that she has lived with for 15 years and which she has made it a painful duty to reveal.

"She expects a difficult, painful confrontation but she is ready for it, convinced that this fight is a duty for her as much as an ordeal."

The Swiss woman had filed a police complaint in Geneva after French women spoke to the media about alleged rapes by Ramadan in hotels in France.

The three-day trial in Geneva will be heard by a panel of judges who will return a verdict on 24 May.

In brief

Italy

Man vows to fight fine for repairing pothole

A man has pledged to fight against the "injustice" of being fined almost €900 for fixing a pothole. Claudio Trenta, 72, was so frustrated by the local council's failure to repair the 30cm (12in) pothole in Barlassina, a small town in Lombardy, that he filled it in himself with cold bitumen.

He was fined €882 (£765) and ordered to restore the hole to its original state. "If they think I'm an idiot, they are wrong," Trenta told Corriere della Sera. "They've provoked me, and so now I'm filing a counter-complaint against the council for negligence."

Trenta, who said he had reported the pothole to the local authority several times, has received a wave of solidarity from across Italy.
Angela Giuffrida *Rome*

United States

Diver breaks record for living underwater

A university professor broke the world record on Sunday for the longest time living underwater without depressurisation.

Joseph Dituri's 74th day living in a pod at the bottom of a nine-metre-deep (30ft) lagoon in Key Largo, Florida, was spent eating a meal of microwaved eggs and salmon, exercising with resistance bands, doing his daily press-ups and taking a nap. The previous record of 73 days, 2hr 34min was set at the same location in 2014. Dituri plans to stay at the lodge for 100 days to complete his mission, called Project Neptune 100.

His underwater research includes experiments in physiology to monitor how the human body responds to long-term exposure to extreme pressure. AP

Austria

Two charged over Hitler speeches on train

Two people were charged yesterday for allegedly playing speeches by Adolf Hitler via the loudspeaker system of a train running from Bregenz to Vienna.

The two suspects, who were not identified, also allegedly blasted "Heil Hitler" via the train's intercom system several times on Sunday. The authorities tracked them down by analysing video from security cameras. Spreading Nazi propaganda is a criminal offence in Austria.

The national railway company, ÖBB,ruled out a cyber-attack. Instead, the suspects are believed to have opened the conductor's cabin with a key owned by the company's employees.
Philip Oltermann *Berlin*

'It gives you distance'

Why young Americans are aping British accents

Alaina Demopoulos
New York

Kyra Green lives with anxiety, and when she misplaced her boarding pass at the airport gate just before her flight was due to leave, the 26-year-old's nerves started acting up. As she looked around for it, the native New Yorker began speaking in a British accent.

"I was throwing shit all over the place, and I was like: 'No, I cannot do this. This is terrible,'" Green said, with the posh inflection of someone who went to a British boarding school. "I was literally scrounging through the trash looking for my boarding pass, but that voice added a little bit of confidence and pizazz when I didn't feel it internally."

Americans have long been called out for their phony British accents: think Madonna in her Guy Ritchie era, or the friend who just came home from studying abroad in London. But generation Z has embraced bad imitations of Cockney slang or a Yorkshire dialect, using obviously fake, theatrical voices to make light of low-grade daily dramas.

What's behind the trend? Green, 26, appeared on the US version of Love Island and blames it on her love for the original UK show. "The accent really took over when I started watching the show," she said. "It blew the accent the fuck up, and everyone was obsessed with their cute little sayings, like 'doing bits'." (That means getting intimate but not having sex.)

It's not just Love Island. "Fake British accent" videos have more than 188,000 views on TikTok, where young people say they use the voice whenever they feel uncomfortable.



▼ *Young people in the US increasingly imitate accents heard on reality shows such as The Only Way Is Essex*
PHOTOGRAPH: REX/SHUTTERSTOCK

Asher Lieberman, a 21-year-old college student and content creator from Miami, said he picked his voice up from watching old X Factor auditions on YouTube.

"I was on a date recently ordering something, and the name of what I wanted came out wrong when I asked for it," Lieberman said. "So I just talked in a British accent for the rest of the order. It's a defence mechanism, a kind of buffer from my actual personality."

Brinton Parker, 30, who lives in the San Francisco Bay Area and works in tech marketing, said the deluge of bad news out of Silicon Valley had her approaching burnout, and she recently asked her manager for support at work.

"I said: 'It's affecting me mental health, innit?'" she explained. "And my boss was like: 'Why did you say it like that?' I think it adds levity to a vulnerable situation. The tougher the conversation, the more Cockney I become."

For Critter Fink, a 26-year-old New Yorker, it can soften the blow of a dark joke. "When you slightly change how you say things with a little accent, it gives you space from a stressful thing," they said. "It's similar to when you add "lol" to the end of a dramatic text - it gives you distance."

Jessie Brown, a hairstylist in Brooklyn, will pop into a British accent when they feel they've overshared with a client. "I use it when I try to segue from something weird I said, or if I trauma-dump by accident," Brown, 29, said.

Call it the generation Z version of keeping calm and carrying on. Amy Walker, an actor and dialect coach, said Brits were associated with keeping a stiff upper lip. "We think of them as cerebral and not super emotional," she said. "The voice can elevate something that feels a little too real in the moment."

Thanks to streaming hits like The Crown and Bridgerton, the voice is everywhere. But Americans are not necessarily rushing to imitate the upper crust any more. Stateside viewers have instead come to appreciate reality shows like Love Island and The Only Way Is Essex. Those shows are filled with petty disagreements and missed encounters, so young Americans feel a connection with the accent when their own lives feel awkward.

"Back when I was growing up, British people were just the villains in Disney movies and Mary Poppins," Walker said. "Now, you get a broader range of different voices and perspectives."



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▲ *People in Belgrade leave flowers and light candles near the scene of a school shooting on 3 May. A teenage suspect is in custody* PHOTOGRAPH: ANDREJ ČUKIĆ/EPA



▼ *An anti-violence rally in Belgrade last week. Two mass shootings have claimed the lives of 18 people*
PHOTOGRAPH: ZORANA JEVTIĆ/REUTERS

Shootings

Weapons amnesty shines light on culture of violence

Jon Henley
Milivoje Pantovic *Belgrade*

In the first week of an amnesty after mass shootings plunged their country into shock and soul-searching, Serbians surrendered more than 13,500 weapons, from guns through hand grenades to anti-tank launchers, and hundreds of thousands of rounds of ammunition.

But in a deeply divided nation awash with lethal weaponry, where war criminals are glorified, reality shows on state TV star convicted murderers, and memories of savage recent conflicts run deep, many doubt whether the president's pledge to "disarm" the country will be enough.

Eighteen people were killed and 21 injured this month in two shootings in as many days.

In Belgrade, a shooter - allegedly a 13-year-old using two of his father's pistols - shot dead eight school pupils and a security guard. A seriously wounded 10-year-old girl died yesterday, bringing the toll to 10. Six other children and a teacher were injured. The suspect is in custody and undergoing psychological evaluation, but is too young to be held criminally responsible. His father is accused of training the teenager to handle weapons and failing to adequately secure the pistols.

The following day, a man armed with an assault rifle and a pistol killed eight people and injured a further 14 in two villages about 30 miles south of the capital. A 21-year-old suspect is in custody.

The president, Aleksandar Vučić, a populist, pro-Kremlin authoritarian whose political roots are in far-right nationalism - he was briefly the information minister under the late Serb leader Slobodan Milošević, who died in custody while on trial for war crimes - decried the shootings as "an attack on our entire country".

Vučić announced the month-long gun amnesty, promising that people could hand over illegal weapons, ammunition and ordnance, as well as legally owned arms, anonymously and without fear of prosecution.

The move won some praise, in particular from abroad, with some commentators contrasting his decisiveness with the apparent inability of the US to tackle gun violence. This year alone the US has witnessed 22 mass killings in which four or more people have been killed, excluding the perpetrator.

Vučić also pledged a two-year moratorium on new gun licences, a review of current licences, more psychological checks, 1,200 extra police officers in schools, and longer jail terms for gun crimes and illegal weapon possession.

But while their president was promising "a sharp response, urgent measures and severe penalties" to tackle gun crime, many Serbs were asking what else may lie behind it - and to what extent Vučić, in power since 2014, may have contributed to the excessive violence in the country, in its politics and on TV.

Some support the government's measures. "There is too much violence. I do not know how they did not address this issue so far," said Ivan Petrović, a retiree. But others are not reassured. "I have a kid and I do not feel safe. I keep my eyes peeled in the playground," said Vesna Dragišić.

Thousands marched in Belgrade on Friday in a second opposition-led "Serbia against violence" protest, demanding the resignation of the interior minister - the education minister has already gone - and an end to what many see as a culture of violence fanned by the media and the ruling party.



▲ *A woman holds a placard bearing a 'stop violence' message during a protest march in Belgrade last week*
PHOTOGRAPH: DARKO VOJINOVIĆ/AP

Vučić has accused his opponents of seeking to exploit the tragedies for political ends. On Sunday he said would stand down "soon" as leader of his governing Serbian Progressive party, pledging parliamentary elections before the end of September.

Nobody knows how many guns there are in Serbia, a country of about 6.8 million people. Maja Bjeloš, a researcher at the Belgrade Centre for Security Policy, said it was unclear how many weapons were registered, let alone how many were held illegally.

"The police have said there are over 900,000 firearms legally held by citizens ... The president said there were 400,000, then two days later 700,000," Bjeloš said. "We have disinformation from the government. But estimates for the total - legal and illegal - run from 1.5m to 3m. That's frightening."

She said weaponry left over from the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s accounted for only part of the arsenal. "There's a tradition of firearms in the home, passed from generation to generation, of firing in the air during festivities," she said. "Poor security at arms factories and police stores account for some. And criminal networks."

Repressive, knee-jerk measures would not help, Bjeloš said: "Serbia has among the most police officers per capita in Europe, but that has not left citizens feeling safer."

Despite ready access to weapons, mass shootings were rare in Serbia before this month; the last major incident was in 2013. But amid hardship, the legacy of the war, endemic corruption and high levels of violence in society, politics and the media, experts have long warned that the presence of so many guns posed a threat.

Zoran Gavrilović, a sociologist at the Bureau for Social Research, said the shootings had not surprised him. "The social climate was leading to this. We have a violent society. It was just a matter of time for it to erupt," he said.

Many blame Vučić, accusing him of sustaining a climate of violence. He and his party regularly demean political opponents and foreign rivals as "scum", "thieves" and "paedophiles". Parliamentary sessions are dominated by crude and aggressive insults.

Nearly 450,000 people have signed a petition calling for two pro-government public TV stations to lose their licences over violent reality shows that, by some estimates, have made up 60% of their recent programming.

Since Vučić came to power, Serbia has fallen from 54th to 93rd of the 180 countries in Reporters Without Borders' World Press Freedom index. Independent media have been squeezed out and journalists attacked.

In theory a candidate for EU accession, the country is torn between the west and its historical, political and economic ties to Russia. Last week the European parliament highlighted stumbling blocks to accession, including Belgrade's refusal to align with EU sanctions on Russia and its reluctance to recognise Kosovo as an independent state.

Klemen Grošelj, a Slovenian MEP, highlighted a lack of progress on an independent judiciary, and media that were "neither independent nor objective".

"I'm very pessimistic," he said. "When I visited after the fall of Milošević, there was this positive energy. Unfortunately, it faded away; there is no real and honest political will for changes to be part of the EU. Serbia will soon need to make a choice."



Serbia's president, Aleksandar Vučić



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Business

Christmas past
After 14 years, John Lewis Partnership has parted ways with adam&eveDDB, the advertising agency behind hit Christmas ads including 2014's Monty the penguin, right, hiring Saatchi & Saatchi instead.

PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN LEWIS/PA



Microsoft gains EU approval for £55bn Activision buyout

Dan Milmo
Alex Hern

The EU approved Microsoft's $69bn (£55bn) acquisition of the Call of Duty creator Activision Blizzard yesterday in a move that drew immediate pushback from its UK counterpart, which had blocked the gaming mega-deal.

The EU accepted Microsoft's concessions on cloud gaming, the same problem that led the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) to block the transaction last month.

The proposed deal aims to bring together Microsoft, the maker of the Xbox console, with the game developer whose hit titles also include World of Warcraft, Hearthstone, Candy Crush Saga and Overwatch.

The approval by the European Commission will revive Microsoft's hopes for the deal as it prepares to appeal against the CMA's decision. The US Federal Trade Commission has also come out against the takeover and is suing to block it.

The commission's preliminary investigation had found that the deal could harm competition in cloud gaming, which allows users to stream video games stored on remote servers on to their devices, and in the supply of rival PC operating systems. It was concerned that if gamers could only play Call of Duty via a Windows-only streaming service then they may be less likely to switch to other operating systems such as macOS or Linux.

However, the commission said yesterday it had accepted Microsoft's proposed remedies. The compromise involves Microsoft offering free licences over a 10-year period, allowing European consumers who purchase Activision PC and console games to stream them on other cloud gaming services.

The EU's competition commissioner, Margrethe Vestager, said the decision would bring Activision's games to "many more devices and consumers than before thanks to cloud game streaming".

She added: "The commitments offered by Microsoft will enable for the first time the streaming of such games in any cloud game streaming services, enhancing competition and opportunities for growth."

The CMA said it stood by its decision to block the deal. "Microsoft's proposals, accepted by the European Commission today, would allow Microsoft to set the terms and conditions for this market for the next 10 years," said Sarah Cardell, the CMA chief executive.

Both the UK and European Commission agreed on the substance of the concerns, with each confirming there was little danger of the market for console games being warped by the acquisition, but much greater risk in the nascent industry of cloud gaming being dominated by Microsoft. The two regulators differed, however, in whether Microsoft's proposed remedies would be sufficient to reduce that risk.

Where the commission said they were, the CMA argued that it was impossible to provide a useful remedy since Microsoft could not know what promises it had to make to preserve competition. Activision's CEO, Bobby Kotick, who had lambasted the CMA's decision last month as evidence that the UK was "closed for business", said the EU had "conducted an extremely thorough, deliberate process to gain a comprehensive understanding of gaming".

Sunak urged to intervene as some grocery prices double

Sarah Butler

Some supermarket meat and vegetable prices have almost doubled over the past year, the consumer group Which? said yesterday, prompting calls for the government to intervene as food industry leaders gather for a Downing Street summit.

Annual inflation on supermarket own-label budget items rose to 25% in April, according to the data from Which?, while the rate of price increases on branded goods remained steady at just under 14%.

However, some individual items rose at a far faster pace. The price of a pack of Morliny frankfurters at Asda shot up from an average of £1.25 to £2.42, an increase of nearly 94%, while four brown onions at Morrisons went from 65p to £1.24, a 91% rise.

The highest rate of inflation by category last month was on cheese and milk at more than 20%, while inflation eased on premium and regular supermarket own-brand items.

Sue Davies, the head of food policy at Which?, urged Rishi Sunak to ask grocery bosses gathering at No 10 today to commit to doing more to hold prices down.

Supermarkets, farmers and food industry leaders are meeting the prime minister to discuss how to tackle food price inflation, which rose to 19% in March, according to official government figures.

Before the summit, agriculture and food lobby groups called for more access to overseas workers to help pick crops and for better regulation of suppliers' relations with supermarkets, as well as help to cope with an anticipated rise in extreme weather conditions created by the climate crisis.

The Competition and Markets Authority said yesterday it would look at whether a poorly functioning market was contributing to food price inflation, alongside a similar investigation into fuel prices.

Europe in line to beat growth predictions despite high interest rates

Phillip Inman

Europe's economy is expected to grow faster than previously thought this year and next, despite high inflation and rising interest rates, according to the European Commission.

The commission said the EU's 27 members would grow at an average of 1% in 2023, up from a previous estimate of 0.8%. It nudged its forecast for growth in 2024 to 1.7% from 1.6%.

The eurozone's 20 members are expected to grow by 1.1% on average and 1.6% next year. By comparison, the UK economy is expected to be weaker, with growth of 0.25% expected this year and 0.75% in 2024, according to the Bank of England.

With fears of a recession easing, EU growth so far this year has been stronger than expected when the last estimates were made in February.

"The EU economy is managing the adjustment to the shocks unleashed by the pandemic and Russia's aggression of Ukraine remarkably well," the commission said in a report. "Last year, the EU successfully managed to largely wean itself off Russian gas."

The Republic of Ireland will lead the EU's growth league over the next two years as it has done over the past two years. Dublin is forecast to enjoy a growth rate of 5.5% in 2023 and 5% in 2024 after chalking up a growth rate of 13.6% in 2021 and 12% in 2022.

France's growth rate will accelerate from 0.7% in 2023 to 1.7% in 2024 while Germany's economy, which was hit hardest by sanctions on Russian gas, is expected to expand by 0.2% this year and 1.4% next year.

Estonia and Sweden are the only EU countries to suffer a contraction this year – Sweden by 0.5% and Estonia by 0.4% – before both make modest recoveries in 2024.

For the first time, commission officials examined the prospects for Ukraine's economy and said the nation had demonstrated remarkable resilience during the war, with much of its economy able to keep operating.

Ukraine's GDP is estimated to have slumped by 29% in 2022. This year growth is expected to be just 0.6%, rising to 4% in 2024, the report said.

Average new rent outside London hits £1,000 for first time

Rupert Jones

The average new monthly rent outside London has passed £1,000 for the first time, figures show, with tenants in Great Britain now typically paying 25% more than they were at the start of the Covid pandemic.

The estate agent Hamptons, which issued the data, warned that the rate of rent rises was "unlikely to slow considerably due to the number of landlords looking to pass on their rising costs" and this might force some tenants to downsize or relocate to a cheaper area.

Many landlords with buy-to-let mortgages have seen their costs rise sharply in the wake of 12 consecutive interest rate rises and the chaos of last autumn's mini-budget by Liz Truss's government.



▲ *The average rent for tenants in London is now more than £2,200 a month, according to Hamptons*
PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID LEVENE/THE GUARDIAN

The average rent on a newly let home outside the capital rose to £1,002 a month in April, according to Hamptons, which was 7.8%, or £72, higher than the figure a year earlier.

Meanwhile, the London rental market is continuing to speed ahead of the rest of the country. Annual rent rises in the capital were now running well ahead of inflation at 17.2%, said the firm, with the average monthly bill passing £2,200 for the first time last month. That would cost the average tenant moving into a new home an extra £3,895 a year.

Across Great Britain as a whole, the average monthly rent rose 11.1% year-on-year in April to reach a new high of £1,249 - the second-highest figure for rental growth across the country on record.

Some in the property sector have claimed the government's renters' reform bill, which will include a ban on property owners evicting tenants without showing any fault on the tenants' part, could prompt more buy-to-let landlords to quit the sector, causing rents to rise further.

Currys sales rise as shoppers buy energy-saving items on credit

Kalyeena Makortoff

Currys has reported improved sales as customers in Britain increasingly turn to loans to pay for energy-saving items such as air fryers and heat-pump tumble dryers amid the cost of living crisis.

The UK's biggest electrical retailer said cost cuts and a focus on promoting more profitable goods and services had improved its margins.

However, it added that price inflation was causing further uncertainty for its future earnings and said it expected to report a decline in full-year profits when it released its annual results in July.

The company's chief executive said Currys had seen a higher take-up of consumer credit as well as repair and trade-in services as households tried to stretch their budgets.

Alex Baldock told analysts and investors yesterday morning that he attributed the trends to rampant inflation, which stands at 10.1%, and said UK consumers were "hard-pressed" by the cost of living crisis.

"That's playing through into relatively depressed demand for discretionary and big-ticket products, and that's placed downward pressure on the technology market," he said.

The retailer said sales had improved over the past two months, but from a very low base. In March and April, customers bought more energy-saving items such as air fryers, microwaves and heat-pump tumble dryers, and electronics such as headphones and coffee makers.

"We're not saying that consumers open their wallets in a carefree way … [so] we're remaining cautious in our outlook," Baldock said.

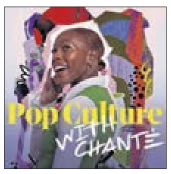
Instead, Currys expected the UK's tech market to "continue to go backwards" over the next year amid the cost of living crisis. Like-for-like sales were forecast to be down by 7% compared with a year earlier.

> *'There's relatively repressed demand for discretionary and big-ticket items'*
>
> **Alex Baldock**
> *Currys chief executive*



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Linda Yaccarino is taking the job after running the $13bn annual ad sales business at NBCUniversal
PHOTOGRAPH: EVERETT COLLECTION INC/ALAMY

'Velvet hammer' The woman tasked with saving Twitter - and Musk from himself

Mark Sweney

'I see I have some new followers," said Linda Yaccarino, adding side-eyes and waving hand emojis to a tongue-in-cheek post responding to the social media explosion that followed her chaotic unveiling as Twitter's chief executive on Friday.

Still weeks away from taking up the role, Yaccarino, a highly respected media veteran known in advertising circles as the "velvet hammer" for her silky but tough negotiating style, has already had a taste of the shambolic corporate environment at the platform since Elon Musk bought it for $44bn (£35bn) last October.

Hours after teasing in a post that he had appointed a new chief executive, a role he had described as a "painful" job that anyone would be "foolish" to take on, Musk confirmed speculation that Yaccarino had accepted the challenge.

The 60-year-old New Yorker leaves a role running the $13bn annual ad sales business at NBCUniversal. Prior to Musk's announcement, she had been rehearsing to lead the company's annual pitch to advertisers.

Instead, Yaccarino will need to channel her considerable skills to convince many of those same advertisers to return to Twitter, whose ad sales have halved from about $5bn to $2.5bn as brands have balked at Musk's moves to drastically relax content moderation policies.

"She is ideal for the job," says Martin Sorrell, the founder of the marketing services giant WPP and digital ad business S4 Capital. "I don't think Musk could have found anyone better for understanding advertisers, both in analogue and digital."



Elon Musk previously described the role of Twitter CEO as 'painful'

Yaccarino has softly taken Musk to task over his cavalier decision-making and penchant for using social media to make announcements, telling him at a recent event to perhaps refrain from making posts after 3am.

However, when she suggested he be held to a "different or higher standard" of conduct, owing to his ownership of Twitter and popularity on the site, the world's second-richest man shot back that that would be a "diminishment of freedom of speech".

The appointment of Yaccarino, whose Instagram account features shots with stars including Vin Diesel, Rami Malek and Kim Kardashian, has prompted a scouring of her own background as observers seek to glean her potential decision-making strategy.

Her role as chair of the taskforce on the future of work at the World Economic Forum in Davos, a target for conspiracy theorists and an event criticised by Musk, led to comments suggesting she might undermine Twitter's self-proclaimed absolutist free speech policy. Musk responded with tweets telling critics to give Yaccarino a chance, while also indicating he would not ditch his free speech policy in search of commercial returns.

Some of Twitter's right-leaning base also voiced concerns about her support for Covid-19 vaccinations and mask-wearing, including working on an educational ad campaign featuring Pope Francis for the Joe Biden administration in 2021, in her role as chair of a non-profit advertising group, the Ad Council.

Liberal Twitter users have pointed out that she has "liked" tweets from figures including Ron DeSantis, the Republican governor with one eye on a potential run for president, and the rightwing commentator Jesse Watters.

From a commercial perspective, Yaccarino is viewed as having the experience, close ad industry relationships and professionalism to get Twitter back on track. Dan Ives, an analyst at the US investment firm Wedbush, has described Musk's move as a "home run hire" for Twitter.

The question is whether Musk will cede enough control to allow her to revitalise its ailing advertising business. He has said he will leave "business operations" to Yaccarino - but will remain executive chairman, chief technology officer and head of product.

"She doesn't see it as mission impossible, she sees it as a fixable situation," Sorrell says. "The big question is: will Musk give her enough room to operate and deal with the brand safety issue? That is the primary concern for clients who want to be able to advertise in a less controversial environment."

Vice declares bankruptcy as it agrees cut-price sale to lenders

Mark Sweney

Vice Media, the once high-flying startup that reached a peak valuation of nearly $6bn (£5bn), has filed for bankruptcy protection in the US as the digital publisher engineers a cut-price sale to a group of lenders.

The company, whose assets include Vice News, Motherboard, Refinery29 and Vice TV, has agreed a sale to a consortium that includes Fortress Investment Group, Soros Fund Management and Monroe Capital for $225m in the form of a credit bid for its assets as well as assuming Vice's "significant liabilities".

Creditors can swap their secured debt, rather than pay cash, for the company's assets. Vice said it "expects to emerge as a financially healthy and stronger company".

The sale, which is expected to conclude in two to three months, comes after years of financial difficulties and executive turmoil at Vice.

"This accelerated court-supervised sale process will strengthen the company and position Vice for long-term growth," said Bruce Dixon and Hozefa Lokhandwala, the co-chief executives of Vice. "We will have new ownership, a simplified capital structure and the ability to operate without the legacy liabilities that have been burdening our business."

Vice, which hit a valuation of $5.7bn in 2017 as media giants including Rupert Murdoch, WPP and Disney clamoured for a slice of its youth appeal, had been seeking a sale of about $1.5bn.

In April, the company - which has been evaluating its future since plans to float using a special purpose acquisition vehicle collapsed two years ago - announced that it was cancelling its popular Vice News Tonight as part of a restructuring that could make more than 100 staff redundant.

$5.7bn
Vice's peak market valuation in 2017. It had been seeking a sale price of $1.5bn in recent months

Vice, which began as a punk magazine in Montreal almost three decades ago, expanded into digital media and TV by striking deals with firms including Sky and HBO.

It was among a generation of fast-rising digital media upstarts such as BuzzFeed that once threatened to supplant legacy media companies with the right recipe for attracting millennial audiences.

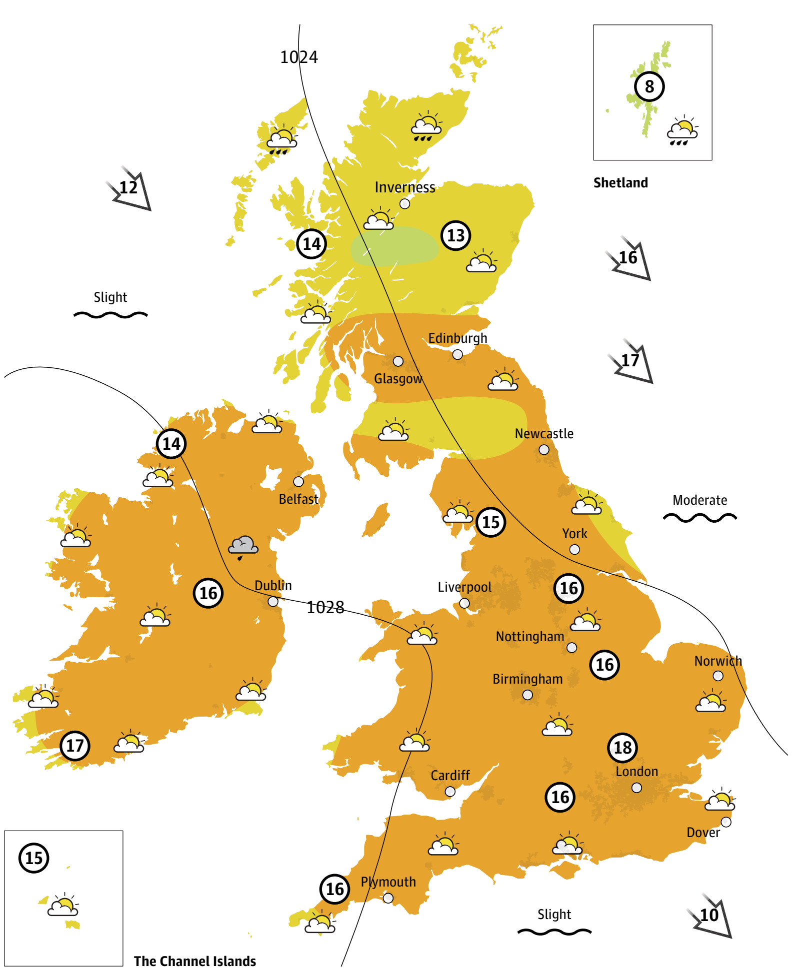
In April, BuzzFeed, which has a market value of $75m after a disastrous initial public offering in 2021, announced that it was closing the remainder of its once highly lauded BuzzFeed News operation and that it was cutting 180 staff.

Weather
Tuesday 16 May 2023

UK and Ireland Noon today

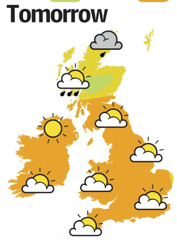
Sunny · Mist · Fog · Sunny intervals · Hazy · Mostly cloudy · Overcast/dull · Sunny showers · Sunny and heavy showers · Light showers · Rain · Sleet · Light snow · Snow showers · Heavy snow · Ice · Thundery rain · Thundery showers · Temperature, ºC · Wind speed, mph · Windy

35C, 30, 25, 20, 15, 10, 5, 0, -5, -10, -15, -20

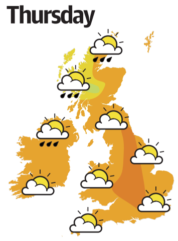


Forecast

Low 8 High 16
Tomorrow



Low 8 High 18
Thursday



Carbon count

Daily atmospheric CO_2 readings from Mauna Loa, Hawaii (ppm):

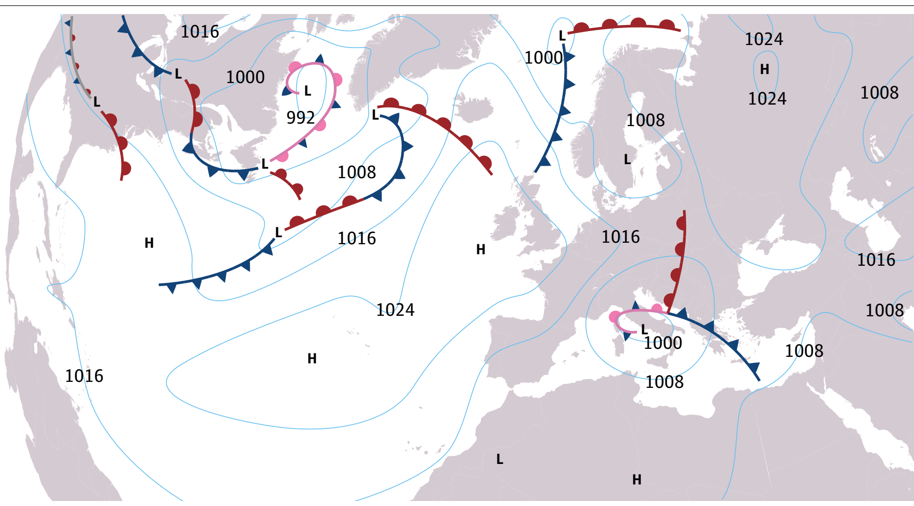
Latest	
14 May 2023	424.31
Weekly average	
07 May 2023	424.29
15 May 2022	420.75
15 May 2013	399.74
Pre-industrial base	280
Safe level	350

Source: NOAA-ESRL

Around the UK

	Lows and highs	Precipitation	Air pollution
London	8 / 18	5%	Low
Manchester	7 / 15	25%	Low
Edinburgh	6 / 16	50%	Low
Belfast	7 / 16	45%	Low
Birmingham	7 / 16	5%	Low
Brighton	8 / 16	5%	Low
Bristol	7 / 15	5%	Low
Cardiff	7 / 16	5%	Low
Newcastle	7 / 16	65%	Low
Penzance	9 / 15	0%	Low

Atlantic front



Cold front
Warm front
Occluded front
Trough

High tides

Source: © Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Times are local UK times

Aberdeen	--	--	1144	3.9m
Avonmouth	0521	11.7m	1752	11.9m
Barrow	0941	8.5m	2218	8.5m
Belfast	0926	3.3m	2200	3.2m
Cobh	0334	3.7m	1601	3.7m
Cromer	0510	4.4m	1701	4.7m
Dover	0947	6.0m	2159	6.3m
Dublin	0956	3.9m	2241	3.7m
Galway	0324	4.6m	1556	4.7m
Greenock	1046	3.2m	2324	3.1m
Harwich	1002	3.8m	2215	3.7m
Holyhead	0836	5.2m	2118	5.1m
Hull	0445	6.7m	1638	7.0m
Leith	0045	5.0m	1256	5.1m
Liverpool	0923	8.6m	2201	8.5m
London Bridge	--	--	1211	6.6m
Lossiemouth	0956	3.7m	2247	3.7m
Milford Haven	0424	6.3m	1655	6.2m
Newquay	0320	6.3m	1550	6.2m
North Shields	0146	4.5m	1350	4.7m
Oban	0420	3.6m	1648	3.3m
Penzance	0252	5.1m	1525	4.9m
Plymouth	0352	5.0m	1628	4.9m
Portsmouth	0941	4.3m	2220	4.6m
Southport	0845	8.3m	2129	8.2m
Stornoway	0511	4.4m	1755	4.2m
Weymouth	0414	0.9m	1656	1.0m
Whitby	0219	4.9m	1424	5.1m
Wick	0929	3.1m	2221	3.1m
Workington	0949	7.6m	2223	7.5m

Sun & Moon



Sun rises	0507
Sun sets	2046
Moon rises	0358
Moon sets	1703
New Moon	19 May

Forecasts and graphics provided by **AccuWeather** ©2023

Lighting up

Belfast	2126 to 0516
Birm'ham	2057 to 0509
Brighton	2044 to 0509
Bristol	2057 to 0517
Carlisle	2113 to 0501
Cork	2122 to 0538
Dublin	2120 to 0522
Glasgow	2125 to 0502
Harlech	2109 to 0516
Inverness	2133 to 0451
London	2046 to 0505
M'chester	2104 to 0507
Newcastle	2109 to 0456
Norwich	2046 to 0455
Penzance	2103 to 0533

Weather tracker

Cyclone Mocha brought strong winds and torrential rain to parts of Bangladesh and Myanmar yesterday. At least five people died and half a million were evacuated, with refugee camps bearing the brunt of the category 5 storm.

The region was rocked by sustained winds of more than 160mph as Mocha made landfall, whipping up gusts closer to 200mph and a storm surge of up to 4 metres. The world's largest refugee camp, in Cox's Bazar, was badly hit and more than 1,300 shelters were destroyed. Heavy rain triggered landslides and floods.

The storm dissipated rapidly as it moved inland, leaving the warm sea that helped fuel it. However, thunderstorms are likely to hamper rescue and cleanup efforts.

Elsewhere, a stark heat divide across North America is expected this week, with temperatures 10-15C above the seasonal norm in parts of the Pacific Northwest and western half of Canada.

The warmth across the north-west could cause some weather stations to break their monthly temperature records, particularly around Vancouver, where temperatures are expected to reach the low 30s celsius. **Nicholas Lee and Jodie Woodcock** *MetDesk*

Around the world

Algiers	24	Lisbon	27
Ams'dam	14	Madrid	23
Athens	23	Malaga	24
Auckland	17	Melb'rne	13
B Aires	22	Mexico C	24
Bangkok	37	Miami	32
Barcelona	22	Milan	18
Basra	38	Mombasa	30
Beijing	35	Moscow	20
Berlin	16	Mumbai	34
Bermuda	22	N Orleans	30
Brussels	15	Nairobi	25
Budapest	18	New Delhi	41
C'hagen	15	New York	27
Cairo	36	Oslo	17
Cape Town	20	Paris	16
Chicago	24	Perth	23
Corfu	21	Prague	15
Dakar	27	Reykjavik	7
Dhaka	32	Rio de J	25
Dublin	16	Rome	20
Florence	18	Shanghai	32
Gibraltar	25	Singapore	32
H Kong	30	Stockh'm	15
Harare	25	Strasb'g	15
Helsinki	16	Sydney	21
Istanbul	26	Tel Aviv	28
Jo'burg	15	Tenerife	24
K Lumpur	33	Tokyo	24
K'mandu	26	Toronto	22
Kabul	25	Vancouv'r	22
Kingston	31	Vienna	16
Kolkata	36	Warsaw	20
L Angeles	25	Wash'ton	23
Lagos	31	Well'ton	14
Lima	23	Zurich	13

Tennis

Alcaraz stunned in Rome by lowly Marozsan

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Football

Arteta must add squad depth for Arsenal to thrive

Page 35 →



Sport



▲ *Leicestershire halved their prices to help out fans financially and also handed out free tickets to local residents*
JOHN MALLETT/SHUTTERSTOCK

Foxes back in hunt

Leicestershire case offers both a parable and a warning for English cricket



Jonathan Liew

The fourth morning at Grace Road dawns brightly and the game is moving at a frightening pace. Leicestershire, following on, are 16 without loss. The Sussex fielders are bounding and skipping across the turf in short, jerky movements. The seamer Brad Currie walks back to his mark in a droll, Charlie Chaplin-style double-step. The commentators are talking in weird electronic blips. At this point you realise the live stream is not working.

Which is obviously something that could happen to anybody. Certainly it would be premature to draw any link between Leicestershire's apparent inability to operate a simple two-camera feed and the fact that the club have finished bottom of the County Championship in eight of the past 14 seasons, and failed to win a single red-ball game in 2022. Eventually the technical gremlins are sorted, in which time the home team have lost one of their openers and are sliding towards a meek defeat.

At which point something curious happens. The opener Rishi Patel goes on a spirited counterattack, and with the all-rounder Wiaan Mulder in support Leicestershire bat out the day for a draw. Steve Smith, here for a pre-Ashes hit, has just three runs and one risible over of leg-spin to show for his week's work. And who says Leicestershire never do their bit for England?

So continues one of the early summer's more quietly uplifting stories. Six rounds in, the championship's perennial punchline are still unbeaten. Last month they won at Headingley for the first time in 113 years. A first promotion in more than two decades is a tantalising possibility. And perhaps the case of Leicestershire offers both a parable and a warning for English cricket, at a time when the very principles of the sport are being shuffled beneath our feet.

Every so often you hear notables from within the game wondering aloud about whether we need 18 counties. Most of the time they're too polite to name names, but let's be real: they're talking about Leicestershire. A club that hasn't played in the top division since 2003. No Indian conglomerate or private equity fund is queueing up to purchase it. And so when the England and Wales Cricket Board debates the merits of a 12-team Premier League or a reduction in red-ball cricket, the subtext is that clubs such as Leicestershire are essentially a drag on the enterprise. What's the point of you? Why should the rest of us continue to bear your impoverished existence?

Around the start of the pandemic, a new chief executive called Sean Jarvis set about trying to answer this question. Jarvis is a Leicester native who has spent most of his career working in football, and occasionally says things such as "we need to establish ourselves as one of the leading clubs in Cricket PLC". And yet for all the jargon there is also the bones of a plan. Membership and corporate bookings are up. Last year the club achieved record turnover despite the late cancellation of a Paloma Faith concert.

But revenue is not an end in itself. Last summer Leicestershire halved their prices to help fans who were struggling financially. Several times a season the club hand out free tickets to local residents. In March they announced plans to redevelop Grace Road, with space for retail units and community housing, healthcare provision and assisted living for the elderly. Jarvis talks a lot about "identity" and on some level he appears to grasp what English cricket as a whole has largely forgotten: that any sporting team worth its space must exist not merely to sell, but to serve.

Whatever you thought of the Hundred when it arrived, there was at least a tangible rationale to it. You build it up. It makes money. The money funds everything else. Fine. But once you sell it off that rationale disappears in an instant. The one-off windfall will quickly vanish into a million sinkholes – bonuses, handouts, capital expenditure projects – and then what? Back where you started, but on the outside looking in, and with nothing left to sell. And Leicestershire, like their live feed, eventually splutter and die. Keep the Hundred in-house, and the entity remains whole. Perhaps Leicestershire do not get promoted. Perhaps they end up becoming a de facto feeder team to the Trent Rockets. But even here there is an ecosystem with a place for them, where everyone is linked and nobody gets forgotten. You think the Delhi Capitals are going to build your gran a house? You think the benign hand of the market is going to halve ticket prices in a cost of living crisis?

> *It is one of the early summer's uplifting stories*

For all its flaws and foibles, Leicestershire is a real thing. It exists, in a way the Trent Entertainment Vehicle does not. It has a mission that goes beyond simply shaking people down for whatever they can pay. It produces cricketers: the exciting leg-spinner Rehan Ahmed the latest. A wild thought: maybe it might achieve even more if the people at the top of the game didn't keep trying to wipe it off the map.

What do we want sport to be? A pure consumer good, escapism on demand, a direct debit that you forget to cancel? Or can it be something more? Can it bring people together, provide a sense of pride and ownership, give people a stake in their town and their town a stake in something larger? You don't have to be a Leicestershire fan, or even like cricket very much at all, to recognise that this is a vision of sport worth fighting for.

Tennis

Alcaraz stunned by qualifier Marozsan in seismic upset

World No 135 proves fearless in ending the winning streak of the US Open champion

Tumaini Carayol
Rome

The qualifier Fabian Marozsan produced the biggest shock of the ATP season so far with a stunning 6-3, 7-6 (4) victory against the second seed Carlos Alcaraz in the third round of the Italian Open yesterday.

Marozsan, a 23-year-old Hungarian ranked No 135, is the lowest-ranked player to defeat Alcaraz since July 2021. Until he came through the qualifying draw in Rome and defeated the No 67 Corentin Moutet, Marozsan had never won an ATP match.

He had additionally arrived in Rome in poor form. Although Marozsan won an ATP Challenger event on clay in March, he started this tournament having lost five of his previous six matches. Alcaraz, meanwhile, had a 30-2 record in 2022 after tournament wins in Barcelona and Madrid and the 20-year-old will return to No 1 in the ATP rankings next week.

"I'm very, very happy," Marozsan said. "I can't imagine this one. It was my dream last night."

On his first appearance on any major stadium court, Marozsan approached the most hyped and in-form player on the tour without fear or favour. From the very beginning of the match, Marozsan served precisely and controlled the baseline. He forced Alcaraz back with consistent aggression and his sweet two-handed backhand while offering the Spaniard a taste of his own medicine: a constant stream of winning drop shots.

As Marozsan commanded the opening set, Alcaraz struggled to find his range. He continued to spray unforced errors, eventually falling down a set and a break. But Alcaraz fought hard, retrieving the break at 3-4 by landing returns and finding greater consistency, and he eventually forced a tie-break.



Carlos Alcaraz was stunned by Fabian Marozsan

Just as it seemed that Alcaraz had steadied himself, establishing a 4-1 lead in the tie-break, Marozsan exploded. He won the final six points of the match with an array of absurd winners from difficult defensive positions. Marozsan attacked until the end, forcing a final forehand error from Alcaraz as he completed the victory of his life.

"I just tried to do something special, win a few games and maybe a set," he said. "I just beat the world No 1, he's the best in our sport, so I'm really happy with this."

Meanwhile, Daniil Medvedev continued to find his feet on clay as he moved into the fourth round with a 3-6, 6-1, 6-3 victory against Bernabé Zapata Miralles of Spain. Medvedev has reached at least the round of 16 of all three clay court Masters 1000 events this year and his progress has been clear.

"This year, I feel different, I feel like I can play on clay," he said. "I can play well. I can put my opponents in trouble. It's just, well, don't miss, don't double fault and that's how you can win matches."

Cycling *Giro d'Italia*

'I'll wear it with pride': Thomas in the pink as Covid hits

Jeremy Whittle

Geraint Thomas will wear the race leader's jersey today in the 10th stage of the Giro d'Italia following the withdrawal, late on Sunday night, of Remco Evenepoel after a positive test for Covid-19.

The 23-year-old Belgian had been the outstanding favourite to claim overall victory in Rome on 28 May, but after a weary performance on Sunday in the 35-kilometre time trial, in which he beat Thomas by a single second, he withdrew that evening. The world road race champion relinquished the leader's pink jersey, or maglia rosa, to Thomas.

"Leading the race is a massive honour," Thomas said. "It's not the way you want to take the lead but it's what's happened and that's the way it is. So yes, I'll wear it with pride."

Thomas said he was "shocked" when he heard, direct from Evenepoel on Sunday evening, that he was leaving the race. "I speak to him a bit and he messaged me, just before his announcement. At first, I thought: 'Is he winding me up?' But it's a huge disappointment, even for me. I was looking forward to a really good battle. It's a huge disappointment for everyone."

Covid-19 has already exerted a significant influence on the Giro this year, forcing a hasty reshuffle on the part of Primoz Roglic's Jumbo-Visma team shortly before the race started. Thomas said his Ineos Grenadiers team would now be further tightening their own health protocols.



▲ *Geraint Thomas sprints through the streets of Cesena during stage nine of the Giro d'Italia*
TIM DE WAELE/GETTY IMAGES

"I guess we need to be a lot more aware of it and go back to what we used to [do] when we were in our own little bubble and wearing masks, in public spaces," said Thomas. "As a team we're going to go back to that kind of strategy."

Despite the presence of the virus in the peloton, there has been no indication as yet from either the race organisers, or the UCI, cycling's world governing body, that teams will retreat into the strict isolated bubbles that characterised the 2020 season.

"If everybody on the race does the same thing then it will stop other riders going home," Thomas said. "Obviously it's a massive loss losing any rider to Covid, especially Remco."

> ***'It's not how you want to take the lead … but that's the way it is'***
>
> **Geraint Thomas**
> *Ineos Grenadiers*

Thomas and his Ineos Grenadiers team are now in a dominant position tactically. With the second-placed Roglic sandwiched between the 2018 Tour de France champion and, in third place, the 2020 Giro champion Tao Geoghegan Hart, the British outfit can afford to wait for Roglic to make his move.

"Myself and Tao are both co-leaders [in the team]," Thomas said. "I've got the jersey but he's close behind. Roglic is super close and the top 10 is all still close. We haven't done a mountain top finish yet, and the race is still in the balance."

One of Thomas's great strengths in Grand Tour racing is his durability. "I don't feel too much pressure or expectation," he said, while admitting he "didn't expect to be the leader on the first rest day".

Thomas added: "I'm normally at my best level in week three and I hope that will be the case again. My time trial on Sunday was already much better than the first day, so hopefully I will continue to improve."

An understudy to Bradley Wiggins and Chris Froome for so many years, before his Tour win five years ago, Thomas is now among the most consistent performers in the peloton. Maybe too, it's about time he was taken more seriously.

"Everyone always doubts me," he said after narrowly missing out on a stage victory in the time trial on Sunday. Perhaps his dry and sometimes self-deprecating humour works against him, yet even his own team management were forced to admit they had misjudged his form after last year's Tour, in which he finished third overall to the runner-up Tadej Pogacar and the champion, Jonas Vingegaard.

Neither Pogacar or Vingegaard are racing in Italy, which leaves Roglic and teammate Geoghegan Hart as the main obstacles to a second Grand Tour win.

"Both me and Tao are in a great position," Thomas said. "I'm leading the race but as soon as someone stands out as the more likely to win then … I'll be happy to help Tao, if he's more likely to win and I'm sure he'd do the same thing."

'Athletes deserve better than we can possibly do'

Continued *from back page*

greater awareness and willingness to speak out, which is good. But I look at how much progress we're making, and I still think the athletes and everybody involved deserves better than I think we can possibly do."

Darcey said that as things stood there were at least three things wrong with the current approach. First, British Gymnastics was "ill-equipped to handle these sorts of cases" as it did not have the expertise or resources to run a large-scale semi-judicial process. Second, complainants often had to wait too long for justice. And third, as British Gymnastics is an investigator, judge and jury, one side or the other often thought it must be biased.

"Even if we had far more resources, I'm not sure we could ever escape from the fact that as a national governing body we sit in the middle, make the rules, and we're investigator, judge and jury. I think that's a pretty invidious place for any NGB."

British Gymnastics is not the only body to face mounting safeguarding costs. Last year British Athletics spent £600,000 on such cases and is fighting off bankruptcy.

This is not the first time such an independent body has been called for, with a widely praised report by Tanni Grey-Thompson in 2017 making a similar recommendation. Darcey pointed out little has happened since then. "But we want young athletes and parents to have confidence that the sports they're sending their kids off to participate in are safe places, and that if something goes wrong it will be dealt with appropriately."

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport did not directly comment on Darcey's calls. In a statement it said it remained "committed to ensuring sport is as safe as possible for everyone, and will continue to work with the sector to strengthen the system where needed".

Cricket

Stokes' fitness thrown into doubt for England's Lord's date with Ireland

Simon Burnton

Ben Stokes is the latest player whose fitness for England's opening Test of the summer has been thrown into doubt, with the coach of his Indian Premier League team admitting that the Test captain is unable to bowl and is being seen simply as "batting cover", six weeks after his last appearance in the competition.

Despite being signed for around £1.6m in December's player auction Stokes has so far played only the first two of Chennai Super Kings' 13 games, scoring seven and eight and conceding 18 runs in his solitary over. Stephen Fleming has said Stokes, who has a left knee injury, is unlikely to appear in their last two matches as the team seeks to seal a place in the playoffs. "Ben's ability to bowl overs at the moment is still a bit of a challenge but he's there as batting cover," the New Zealander said, adding of his potential selection in the remainder of the season that "it's not our style to chop and change".

That has also been England's hallmark in their first year under the stewardship of Stokes and Fleming's compatriot Brendon McCullum. But for all their consistency of selection there is a lot of uncertainty about the makeup of the side that will play Ireland at Lord's in a fortnight, and of the squad for that game which will be announced today.

One name whose presence is guaranteed is Jonny Bairstow, who has returned to fitness following last September's golfing injury and is ready to test McCullum's promise that "as soon as he's fit he's back in the side". Bairstow has kept wicket in the two games he has played this month for Yorkshire and with Harry Brook having flourished over the winter at No 5, where the 33-year-old played to such effect last summer, he seems likely to be given the gloves and a place at No 7, thereby nudging Ben Foakes out of the side and perhaps the squad.

Foakes was repeatedly described as "the best wicketkeeper in the world" by Stokes last year but his restrained batting style – "I'm not, as you'd say, Bazball," as he put it in February – sits uneasily with England's overall approach since McCullum's appointment. This decision may need to be postponed should Stokes decide to spend the Ireland Test on the sidelines.

Jimmy Anderson's groin injury, confirmed late on Sunday night after a scan on Saturday, has turned another certain starter into a mere possible – and with the Ashes in mind no risks are likely to be taken against Ireland. Meanwhile, the three bowlers of express pace that England had planned to rotate through the summer might all start it on the sidelines, with Jofra Archer still discomfited by an elbow injury, Olly Stone already out with a hamstring strain and Mark Wood at home awaiting the birth of his first child.

This could lead to the return of Chris Woakes, who has not played a Test since last March, the dying days of Joe Root's captaincy, having been ruled out of the entire 2022 summer with a persistent knee injury. Saqib Mahmood and Matthew Fisher, two other players with Test experience, will also be considered by a committee that for the first time includes Luke Wright after his appointment as selector last November.

Woakes's appeal is boosted by a remarkable record at Lord's, where in five matches he has taken 27 wickets at an average of 11.33 (of those who have played there at least four times the only other Englishman whose bowling average is below 14.5 is WG Grace, with 13.0). England selectors will also remember that when Ireland played a Test there in 2019 Woakes took six second-innings wickets for 17 runs in 7.4 overs to propel England to victory. If selected he would join Anderson, Stuart Broad, Ollie Robinson and Matt Potts as seam options, alongside the spinner Jack Leach.

Meanwhile, the ICC's cricket committee has bowed to pressure – including from Stokes and Broad, as well as India's former captain, Virat Kohli – to stop requiring on-field officials to give a soft signal when they refer decisions, such as low catches, to the TV umpire. "Soft signals have been discussed at cricket committee meetings over the last couple of years," said the chair, Sourav Ganguly. "The committee deliberated and concluded that soft signals were unnecessary and at times confusing."

The summer's Tests

Only Test
v Ireland Lord's *1 June*
First Test
v Australia Edgbaston *16 June*
Second Test
v Australia Lord's *28 June*
Third Test
v Australia Headingley *6 July*
Fourth Test
v Australia Old Trafford *19 July*
Fifth Test
v Australia The Oval *27 July*



▲ *Ben Stokes has not featured in the Indian Premier League for six weeks*
TOM JENKINS/THE GUARDIAN

Rugby union

London Irish face risk of Premiership suspension

Gerard Meagher

London Irish will be suspended from next season's Premiership unless the proposed takeover by a US consortium is completed by 30 May or the club provides proof of funding for the entire 2023-24 campaign, the Rugby Football Union has warned.

The ultimatum from the RFU comes amid fears the protracted takeover will drag on into next season, and heightens the prospect of a third club being thrown out of the Premiership in eight months.

The RFU cited the need for certainty for players, staff and fans of the club and, although insiders have been hopeful the takeover will be completed, the RFU's intervention is a deeply worrying sign given the impending deadline.

For Irish to avoid being kicked out of the Premiership, the takeover must be completed and approved by the RFU with the buyers undertaking to provide all required working capital to meet the club's obligations for at least next season.

Failing that, the Exiles must demonstrate capacity to fund the club next term. Expulsion would be a colossal blow for the Premiership given the demises of Wasps and Worcester this season.

This month the current owner, Mick Crossan, finally stepped in to belatedly pay the players' April wages after the delay led the squad to consider boycotting their final match of the season, to demand physical proof they were insured to take part in it and to consider submitting breach-of-contract letters.

It remains to be seen if Crossan can continue to fund the club next term if the takeover is not completed before the RFU's deadline, given Irish have debts of around £30m and he has been looking to sell all season. That they are tenants of the Gtech Community Stadium makes them less attractive for investors, though their state-of-the-art training centre in Sunbury is an impressive asset.



▲ *London Irish have 10 working days to complete the club's takeover*

Well-placed sources have expressed considerable scepticism that the takeover will go through, not least because financial clouds have been looming over Irish since October when staff members began actively seeking alternative employment. Against that backdrop their fifth-place finish was all the more impressive, but a trying campaign has taken its toll and the relief following their final match was apparent.

The RFU is evidently desperate to avoid a repeat of the Worcester situation, so too Premiership Rugby which, along with the union and the Rugby Players' Association, has been applying pressure on Irish to provide certainty.

There is desperation to avoid another club going bust even though a 10-team league has been identified as the optimal solution from 2024 onwards.

Worcester's problems surfaced last summer but they were allowed to begin the 2022-23 season, only to be thrown out in October. Wasps soon followed, plunging the Premiership into crisis.

An RFU statement read: "If the club fails to meet these conditions it will be suspended from participating in the Premiership [and other competitions] in season 2023-24 to avoid a scenario where the club enters insolvency mid-season, with the corresponding and substantial impact that has on players, staff, and fans, as well as on the remainder of the league."

The RFU went on to say that the deadline was set "to give enough time for the buyers to provide the information needed and for the transaction to complete" but the clock is ticking, given that leaves the buyers only 10 working days. All the more so because the RFU is also under pressure to complete its due diligence after the chief executive, Bill Sweeney, was accused of being "asleep on the job".

Sweeney and Premiership Rugby's Simon Massie-Taylor were blamed for "failure on an epic scale" at a parliamentary inquiry into the demises of Worcester and Wasps.

Rugby league

2025 World Cup in jeopardy after France pull out of hosting event

Aaron Bower

The 2025 Rugby League World Cup is in serious doubt after the hosts, France, confirmed they would not be able to stage the tournament. France had been preparing to be sole hosts of the event for the first time since they held it in 1972, but have pulled out after funding cuts from the French government.

The government had demanded a guarantee concerning the possibility of the tournament making a loss. Conditions initially set to secure the economic viability of the event were not fulfilled and, despite being given additional time to secure funding, the organising committee was unable to do so. That left them unable to commit to hosting the biggest event in world rugby league.

The International Rugby League will now convene at a board meeting this summer to consider alternative options for host nations in 2025. That could include New Zealand or a possible joint bid from Pacific nations including Samoa and Tonga, though the latter is unlikely because of the logistical implications required to stage the event at such short notice.

The Guardian understands England will almost certainly not bid, with the significant government funding that helped to stage the tournament last year unlikely to be repeated again so soon.

Troy Grant, the chair of the IRL, said: "The Rugby League World Cup in France in 2025 was always an ambitious project given the unprecedented short lead-in time due to the pandemic.

"I respect the French government's decision amid the challenges they are facing but I can't hide my disappointment. We will now accelerate our consideration of other contingency options."

The tournament was expected to be the biggest in history, played across 40 venues with men's, women's, wheelchair and youth events running alongside one another. But with such a short space of time until the event was due to take place, the prospect of the World Cup being pushed back to 2026 seems increasingly likely.



▲ *The 2025 World Cup could now be pushed back a year until 2026*

Football In brief

Champions League semi-final

Pioli expecting Leão return against Inter

The Milan forward Rafael Leão should be fit to face Inter in the Champions League tonight. His manager, Stefano Pioli, gave the injury update yesterday after the Portuguese missed the 2-0 first-leg semi-final defeat and also sat out Saturday's shock Serie A loss to Spezia with a thigh injury. When asked about Leão, who has 13 goals and 10 assists this season, Pioli said: "He is better, as are [Rade] Krunic and [Junior] Messias. If everything goes as it should, they will be available for this afternoon's training and for the game." Meanwhile, Inter's manager, Simone Inzaghi, said Romelu Lukaku, on loan from Chelsea, has entered the final stretch of the season in the "best possible way" after scoring three goals in his last three games. **Reuters**

Sky Bet Championship playoffs

Edwards: 'Play like your lives depend on it'

Rob Edwards has called on Luton to play "like our lives depend on it" in tonight's Championship playoff semi-final second leg against Sunderland. The Hatters' hopes of reaching the Premier League for the first time suffered a setback on Saturday after Sunderland claimed a 2-1 win at the Stadium of Light. "We have got to be calm because we need 11 players on the pitch, but we need fire and then to be ice cold in the right moments," said Edwards. "We need to play with real fire and like our lives depend on it tomorrow. We don't want this to be the end." **PA Media**

Manchester United

Knee injury ends season for Sabitzer

Marcel Sabitzer has been ruled out of Manchester United's final three matches of the Premier League season as well as next month's FA Cup final because of a knee injury. The 29-year-old Austrian, who joined United on loan from Bayern Munich in January, missed Saturday's 2-0 win over Wolves and tests have revealed a meniscal problem, bringing his campaign to an early end. **PA Media**



Marcel Sabitzer will miss the FA Cup final next month

'A brutal league': Barcelona's title heralds new era



▼ *Barcelona after winning La Liga at the home of their city rivals Espanyol*
DAVID RAMOS/GETTY IMAGES

Xavi says his team is still under construction - but La Liga success has brought stability in a turbulent time

Sid Lowe

In the end, no one could catch Barcelona, not even the Espanyol fans who chased them off the pitch and down the tunnel - although they got closer than anybody else. The banner at the RCDE Stadium on Sunday had declared "we are Espanyol and this is our life", yet it wasn't one they chose, still less one they liked. They had never seen their team win a derby in the place they made home, and this time not only did they witness another defeat that pushed them ever closer to a second relegation in three seasons, but the few who hadn't left early also watched their rivals celebrate becoming champions in their own back garden. For some - morons, mostly - it was too much to take.

Out there in the centre circle Barcelona were dancing a *sardana*, a ring of players and staff spinning, when suddenly they broke into a sprint instead. There had been no provocation and they hadn't even been there three minutes, the coach Xavi Hernández already deciding it was enough, that this was neither the time nor the place and calling them to come in, when it happened. In the south stand, some Espanyol fans - a couple of hundred perhaps, many with faces covered - smashed barriers, climbed on to the pitch and began a stampede, heading for the players. Alerted just in time, Barça set off straight for the sideline, bundling in. Some fell as they went, others were caught up in it all, scared. As he ducked beyond the forming cordon, Frank Kessié smiled.

There, from behind police and security staff hurriedly trying - and not always succeeding - to block off the entrance to the tunnel, they watched missiles being thrown, chairs and bottles flying, and listened to the abuse. Some supporters turned to look up at the directors' box and demanded resignations. One kicked over a TV camera; he, it turned out, was on the list for the Partido Popular at the municipal elections and is a kids' coach. Inside, there were confrontations, players pushed back: Ronald Araújo and Sergio Busquets especially. "It's a pity, but it's football, it's life," Barcelona's captain said. "What matters now is to celebrate, to be happy."

In the dressing room, they did and they were. The club president, Joan Laporta, barrelled in: rolling and bouncing about, suit soaked, tie tugged to one side, dirty kit thrown at him. Araújo, hair dyed blue and red - "I reckon I look nice like this" - was streaming on Instagram and Lionel Messi had joined the chat. Seven kilometres away, back towards the city, a crowd was building at Barcelona's Joan Gamper training ground, first stop for the players who piled on to the balcony above. More supporters gathered around the Canaletes fountain, a traditional meeting point at the top of the Ramblas. What time's the curfew, Xavi was asked. "Nah, tonight there's freedom," he said. "This deserves a big celebration." Yesterday evening, they took a bus through the city alongside their all-conquering women's team.

Back in August 2019, Messi expressed his hope that one day people would realise how hard it is to win the league. Barcelona had won their eighth in 11 years four months before that, but there had been no bus. Anfield was coming up and the domestic title was, well, *assumed*. The night they clinched it, the players wore T-shirts saying, "the extraordinary thing is that it seems normal". This time was different. They had seen, been reminded, how hard it can be to win a league, learned to love it. This was extraordinary, full stop, and no longer normal; this is the first time Barcelona have won the title since then.

Four years is not exactly an eternity, but it can feel like it. Especially when enough has happened for a decade anywhere else. And if this is the kind of "crisis" many clubs would crave, it is also real and this felt cathartic. The T-shirts they wore this time said: "The league is ours, the future too". Over-optimistic, perhaps, but maybe there's something in that, however small, and it spoke of an emotional need. "We've brought the happiness back," Laporta said.

This is Barcelona's first league title without Messi this century. Halfway through the season, Gerard Piqué announced his retirement - he was invited to join the celebrations - and Sergio Busquets will not continue, his ninth title to be his last. "I wanted to leave with this," he said.

This is a different Barcelona, a different era. It is still, Xavi insists, a team under construction but it is a side, he said, whose success has brought stability. Although that is not a point he drove home, it is an important one. This is a team that have won the league at a time of change and financial crisis, working within a club with €1bn debt, building work at the Camp Nou about to force them into exile at Montjuïc, and with the Negreira case as a backdrop, all the noise that has surrounded them.

When they lost the way they did at the Bernabéu in October, winning the league seemed implausible but they have competed like no one, including themselves. This may be the least *Barcelona* of all Barcelona teams, which makes winning the title feel even better - or at least more meritorious, overcoming obstacles that might have once been insurmountable.

The *clásico* brought a shift, a "tactical variation" according to Busquets. Gavi played supposedly in the front three but was more part of a four-man box in the middle. "No one knows what to call his position," Marc-André Ter Stegen admitted, but whatever it was it worked. "We had brilliant games and others where we had to roll up our sleeves," Busquets said. The words he used to describe Barcelona were: "solid", "stable" and "*solidario*", adding: "The defensive numbers were good."



▲ *Xavi says Barcelona showed they 'know how to suffer' during title win*

In the south stand, some Espanyol fans - many with faces covered - smashed barriers

It was certainly Ter Stegen's league too, possibly more than anyone else. He was the one man unhappy at how Sunday night went, two insignificant goals irritating him: they were after all, a sixth of all those he has conceded all season, a symbol of the shift. He has let in 13, *thirteen*, in the league, on course for another record. Only two have been at the Camp Nou and they were a penalty and an own goal. On Sunday Barcelona scored four; on many nights it has been just one. A third of their games have finished 1-0.

"This is an extraordinary league, brutal, and we have to really value the way we did it: at times, we played very well, at others we showed we know how to suffer, how to be a block," the coach said.

That may not sound much like Xavi, the ultimate ideologue, defender of a footballing faith, but he has shown the intelligence and adaptability needed and together they have found a way.

So, he was asked, once the champions had escaped the stampede and were safely inside where the celebrations could begin properly, the title theirs four years on, is this Xavi's league?

"No," he said, "it's Barcelona's."

Arteta must improve Arsenal depth after pain of near miss

With backup options found wanting during the run-in, it is crucial the club gets this summer's recruitment right

Nick Ames

It felt like a throwback to darker days when Mikel Arteta, wan and downcast, faced the media after his side's destruction by Brighton. There have been few reasons for dejection this season and, even after draws or defeats, he has generally emphasised the sunny aspects of Arsenal's revival. This time, though, there was the clear sense a title dream had died and the note Arteta struck was bleak.

"If a team is capable of doing that when it comes to the biggest stage, there's a lot of things to analyse and think about because it cannot happen," he said ominously, subsequently reiterating they were short of the level needed to compete for honours domestically and in the Champions League.

To an extent that is nothing new: Arsenal were always going to require a revamp this summer and there is little question they have overperformed according to their playing resources. The manner of their drop-off is best observed by chopping their season in two. During the first 19 games, up to and including the dramatic win against Manchester United in January, they won 50 points at an average of 2.63 per match; the following 17 have brought 31 points at an average of 1.82. Arsenal spent the first half of the campaign in the vein of runaway champions and the second in form befitting a side that would usually finish somewhere between third and sixth.

The difference is stark, although some degree of tail-off might have been expected from a young team in that position for the first time. Arteta could bemoan injuries but he knows they cannot account for everything. Gabriel Jesus and William Saliba have been missed at different points of the campaign, and Takehiro Tomiyasu's versatility would have been useful this spring. Yet the treatment room has never been overflowing and the squad must be better stocked if they are to see the job through in future.

Numbers have been less of a problem than quality. Saliba required a higher-grade deputy than Rob Holding or Jakub Kiwior, although the latter's recent performances have shown promise; out wide there is no semblance of serious competition for Bukayo Saka, who has been muted of late; Fábio Vieira is not ready to swap in regularly for Martin Ødegaard; up front there appears a vacancy for a striker of real stature who can present an alternative to Jesus; and at left-back Kieran Tierney, a fine player but incomparable to Oleksandr Zinchenko, has seen the team evolve beyond him.

Arteta will wonder whether opponents have now figured out elements of Arsenal's approach



▲ *Mikel Arteta and his Arsenal team after a chastening defeat by Brighton*
NEIL HALL/EPA

To keep up the pace in 2023-24, Arteta will need better alternatives, individuals whose rotation into the side will not diminish the effectiveness. That will mean more established players and, in order to attract them, a greater willingness from the manager to chop and change. He wants Saka to be capable of playing more than 60 games a season but it would do no harm if someone of comparable gifts, maybe Bayer Leverkusen's Moussa Diaby, were ready to start at least a third of them.

Perhaps Jesus would take less of a buffeting if a first-rate centre-forward were available to soften up defences when deemed necessary. Saliba, who is yet to agree a new contract, could do with cover of equivalent virtuosity.

The area of greatest interest may, in fact, be the one in which Arsenal are laden with experience. Jorginho, Thomas Partey and Granit Xhaka will be 31, 30 and 30 respectively when next season starts; Mohamed Elneny, around for another year as backup when fit, also turns 31 soon. It is little secret that Arsenal would like to sign Declan Rice; arguably there would be room too for another long-term target, Moisés Caicedo, to restore the age balance if funds permit. That would surely mean a senior figure moving on. Arteta paid tribute to Xhaka last Friday, hailing "probably the best season he has had at the club", but there is a feeling that both parties may see sense in ending on a high.

Arsenal should bring in more than £80m if Tierney, Holding, Xhaka and Emile Smith Rowe depart along with well-regarded younger players such as Folarin Balogun and Charlie Patino. Their transfer window pot is expected to be substantial and Arteta will search for additions who hit the sweet spot between ready-made talent and a higher ceiling.

Perhaps he will also wonder whether opponents figured out elements of Arsenal's approach at the halfway mark. They have been vulnerable to an aggressive and, with that, sloppy in building from the back. Goals conceded against Southampton and Brighton, along with what may have been a season-changing penalty award for West Ham a month ago, were directly linked to errors in first-phase buildup. Further forward Jesus has spent much of his time marshalled into less dangerous areas and Saka, while a huge threat going inside or out, has more often been ushered to the byline on his weaker right foot than permitted to cut inside and let rip with his left.

In a league of few secrets, Arteta must conjure up fresh surprises. Next year they can expect an enhanced threat from Newcastle and it is impossible to imagine at least one of Manchester United, Liverpool, Tottenham and Chelsea not straightening up. "You have to do a lot of good things to be second in this league," Arteta said before returning to problem-solving mode. History will agree with him but it may also judge Arsenal's long-term viability as contenders by their response to the near miss that so dispirited the manager.

Wembley lessons
Chelsea's flexibility makes rivals bend to their will

Suzanne Wrack

Hybrid monsters

After Chelsea had navigated their way past Bayern Munich in 2021 to earn a place in their first Champions League final, Emma Hayes labelled her gutsy side "mentality monsters". They then lost the final against Barcelona by a humbling 4-0 scoreline. But the "mentality monsters" moniker stuck and has been reaffirmed in three consecutive FA Cup wins and back-to-back Women's Super League titles, with a third in sight. After beating Manchester United 1-0 to win the FA Cup at Wembley on Sunday, Hayes had a new label for her side. "What the team has become is the most flexible team. Our team has become 'hybrid monsters'. We can float between things in ways that takes years to master. They are so adaptable."

Winning in transition

Football teams exist in cycles, with the core peaking and then being pulled apart as the side is reshaped for the next phase. Chelsea are in transition. The team have had to cope for much of the season without the forwards Fran Kirby and Pernille Harder and the summer signing Kadeisha Buchanan forced the captain, Magda Eriksson, out of the side in the early stages of the season. But it is ongoing, with Harder and Eriksson out of contract at the end of the season and courting offers and Kirby's injury and illness record meaning Chelsea always need a plan B. Despite the turmoil, they are still winning and that is what makes these victories more impressive. After their triumph on Sunday, Hayes spoke of her aim during periods of change. "Our team has been in transition," she said. "We had six different players in the starting lineup to last year's final. That, for me, is a sign of real progress. My big thing is: 'How can we keep winning while transitioning?' To win knowing we're in that stage, this is my most memorable FA Cup final."

Depth and bench

"Manchester United had the first half but we had the second half," Hayes said. United could rue not capitalising on their first-half dominance but it was in the second that the game turned. In the 57th minute, Harder and the midfielder Sophie Ingle replaced Jessie Fleming and Melanie Leupolz and the momentum shifted in Chelsea's favour. United's brightest threat, Nikita Parris, exited a few minutes later, with Rachel Williams coming on, and the Reds faded. The later introductions of Lucia García and Martha Thomas underwhelmed. That is the difference between the sides. Chelsea have not only high-quality depth in their squad but also players on the bench with many minutes under their belts.

"All the time in training, we don't play starting groups, we believe in different combinations, different relationships … I don't put together a team of 11 players - it's about a squad," Hayes had said before the final. That is the level United need to reach. The starting XI is strong, but Marc Skinner's lack of rotation this term has frustrated a layer of the fanbase. It is costly not only because those players don't get a rest but also because the transition of players in and out of the XI is not smooth. Convincing Alessia Russo and Ona Batlle, whose contracts are up this summer, to stay will be vital for United alongside strengthening the squad.

But will players be enticed to the club if playing time is limited? Not even Champions League football will be enough to lure players if they won't play.



Sam Kerr flies the flag for Australia this summer

Is this the Kerr World Cup?

There is no doubting Sam Kerr's phenomenal talent and drive. Her 10th goal in seven domestic cup finals is testament to the Australian's potency. Kerr has been the figurehead of Chelsea's more bruising charge towards the double this season, a role she has shared in recent years with Harder and Kirby. The return of Harder, who has four goals and an assist in two league games since her comeback from injury and set up Kerr for the winning goal in the final, speaks to how much has been put on Kerr's shoulders. She has looked knackered but Harder's availability is allowing her much-needed rest. The World Cup starts in July and Kerr is the tournament's poster woman. Australia have had their share of injuries this year, with Arsenal's Caitlin Foord and Steph Catley, San Diego Wave's Emily van Egmond, Melbourne Victory's Elise Kellond-Knight, Tottenham's Kyah Simon and Aston Villa's Emily Gielnik among those who missed their most recent training camp. Some will return, some won't, but what has been clear this season is that if Kerr is there anything can happen no matter who is around her or what the odds are.

Liverpool's triple treat leaves sorry Leicester on brink

Leicester	**0**
Liverpool	**3**
Jones 33 36, Alexander-Arnold 71	

	Leicester	Liverpool
Possession	35%	65%
Shots on target	4	5
Corners	4	4

Ben Fisher
King Power Stadium

Jürgen Klopp had said there are five millions ways to win a game and in a routine victory that ensures Manchester United can feel Liverpool breathing down their necks, Trent Alexander-Arnold exhibited one of the finer ways in which to score a goal.

Alexander-Arnold emphatically sealed victory with a stunning free-kick and he could have hardly picked a better moment given Gareth Southgate and his assistant, Steve Holland, were among those in attendance.

Alexander-Arnold, who again played as an inverted full-back, popping up centrally, arrowed his strike into the top corner, cementing a seventh straight win after a neat double by Curtis Jones.

Liverpool railroaded lowly Leicester, scoring twice inside three first-half minutes, to earn a healthy buffer and Alexander-Arnold capped victory after the returning Jonny Evans, the Leicester club captain, was deemed to have fouled Jordan Henderson, his Liverpool counterpart.

Liverpool's late push to qualify for the Champions League continues to gather pace but Leicester's thoughts lay firmly elsewhere. If Leicester are to avoid relegation, a team that has won one of their previous 15 matches, must win one - if not both - of their remaining games. And even then that may prove insufficient.

For a reminder of how the outlook has changed for Leicester, on this day two years ago they were cavorting with the FA Cup after lifting the trophy for the first time in their history at Wembley.

Five of the starting lineup from that day also began here, including Evans, who made his first league start since October after a hamstring complaint. Evans initially seemed to provide a welcome calm but two quick Liverpool goals soon shifted even the slightest sense of comfort.

Now Leicester are staring at relegation to the Championship, seven years on from their unthinkable 5000-1 title win. The galling thing for interim manager Dean Smith is that until Jones's first goal, on 33 minutes, Leicester had kept Liverpool at arm's length.

Luis Díaz, one of two Liverpool changes from victory over Brentford last time out, skittled a shot against the side netting a few minutes earlier. Then a long ball downfield by Alisson altered the picture. Wout Faes did not deal with the ball and Díaz was first to the punch.

Henderson, Klopp's other change, found Mohamed Salah, who sent a cross towards the back post. By the time Boubakary Soumaré spied Jones in his peripheral vision it was too late and Jones arrived to sweep the ball in first time with his left foot.

It was a painful goal from a Leicester perspective but the pain was about to get much worse. Cody Gakpo accelerated clear of Wilfred Ndidi and Soumaré on halfway and played in Salah, who fed the roaming Jones with a cute pass. Jones collected the ball on his right foot, swivelled and promptly smacked the ball beyond Daniel Iversen with his next touch.

By now - with 36 minutes on the clock - any grains of belief had been shredded. A couple of Leicester supporters headed for the concourses. Liverpool would have added a third seconds later, straight from the restart, but for Iversen's instinctive stop to deny Gakpo. Smith placed his hands on his head as Gakpo soared through on goal. At that point Smith recognised his team were "frazzled" and needed half-time to "clear their heads".

The slate-grey skies at half-time married with a bleak forecast for Leicester, who visit Newcastle before hosting Brighton on the final day. Last week, after a humiliating defeat at Fulham, Smith cancelled the players' day off and this week the end-of-season awards night was canned.

Leicester chairman, Aiyawatt Srivaddhanaprabha, naturally struck an upbeat tone in his programme notes. "I feel sure our fate will be determined by our own actions," he said, but failure to yield victory means they will be relying on their rivals to do them a favour or two from here.

Alisson had to make the first notable save of the second half. Harvey Barnes exchanged passes with Jamie Vardy and then Youri Tielemans before picking the ball up on the edge of the Liverpool 18-yard box.

Barnes took aim with his right foot but Alisson flew to his left and pushed a curling shot wide with a strong right hand. Leicester's lax

Liverpool double their advantage

Curtis Jones fires in Liverpool's second goal following a pass from Mohamed Salah
ANDREW BOYERS/ ACTION IMAGES/ REUTERS



defending always offered Liverpool encouragement and Díaz was allowed to trickle an inviting ball across the six-yard box.

The full-back Ricardo Pereira, who scored to send Leicester into a first European semi-final 13 months ago, was unsurprisingly rusty on his return from injury. Luckily for Leicester, no red shirts were on hand to prod in.

But when Evans felled Henderson how Liverpool feasted on the opportunity to add a third goal. Salah back-heeled a free-kick half a yard into the path of Alexander-Arnold, who lashed an unstoppable right-foot strike high into the top corner.

Alexander-Arnold wheeled away and embarked on a knee slide in front of the pocket of Liverpool supporters who had been singing Roberto Firmino's name on loop. It was time to turn up the volume.

Leicester
4-3-3
Iversen; Pereira● (Thomas 67●), Faes, Evans (Souttar 89), Castagne; Ndidi (Daka 61), Soumaré, Tielemans; Maddison, Vardy, Barnes (Tetê 61)
Subs not used Smithies, Kristiansen, Amartey, Mendy, Praet

Liverpool
4-3-3
Alisson; Alexander-Arnold, Konaté●, Van Dijk, Robertson; Henderson (Milner 74), Fabinho, Jones (Carvalho 84); Gakpo, Díaz (Jota 74), Salah (Elliott 88)
Subs not used Kelleher, Gomez, Tsimikas, Arthur, Matip

Referee Craig Pawson **Attendance** 32,225





Jürgen Klopp is relieved after Liverpool secured European football

Top-four chase
'Our job is to keep the pressure on'

Ben Fisher
King Power Stadium

Jürgen Klopp admitted to feeling relieved after Liverpool guaranteed a Europa League place next season courtesy of a 3-0 victory at Leicester but challenged his players to keep their rivals for a top-four spot "on their toes" as they continued their late push to qualify for the Champions League.

Curtis Jones scored twice before Trent Alexander-Arnold capped a seventh straight victory with an excellent free-kick, to move within a point of both fourth-placed Manchester United and third-placed Newcastle, both of whom have a game in hand on Liverpool. A sixth-placed finish this season now is the worst-case scenario for Liverpool, who host Aston Villa on Saturday before a final-day trip to Southampton.

Klopp conceded he seriously doubted Liverpool's chances of playing in Europe as recently as six weeks ago. Liverpool were 10th after a 3-0 defeat at Wolves in February but they have lost two league games since, the last at Manchester City in April. Asked whether he was relieved to secure European football after a testing season, Klopp replied: "Massively. Six, seven weeks ago I didn't believe it could happen. What we lacked at the time was obviously consistency.

"There was only one way for us to do it, by pretty much winning all of our games. It is crazy but that was the situation we were in. We knew before the game that we would qualify for the Europa League if we won the game, which is absolutely great from where we have come from.

"The rest is not in our hands but we know we have to win all the games until the end of the season to have a chance [of qualifying for the Champions League]. Our job is to keep the pressure on. It's not likely, but if not then this is already better than we could have expected six, seven weeks ago."

Leicester travel to Newcastle next Monday before hosting West Ham on the final day but, significantly, their destiny is no longer in their control. Dean Smith, Leicester's interim manager, insisted he can keep the club in the Premier League despite a sixth defeat in nine matches. "Yeah, of course I do," Smith said. "I would be stupid if I sat here and said 'No'."

Chelsea target Osimhen to lead the line for Pochettino

Jacob Steinberg

Chelsea are lining up an ambitious move for Napoli's Victor Osimhen, with Mauricio Pochettino keen to bring in a striker when he takes over as head coach this summer.

Pochettino is flying to London this week to sign a three-year deal and will have funds to strengthen his squad. Chelsea want a goalkeeper, additions in central midfield and a potent No 9. They have toiled in the final third this season and have not had a clinical striker since selling Diego Costa in 2017.

Chelsea, who are fighting a losing battle to keep Mason Mount, have had Osimhen on their radar for a while. The Nigeria striker has been crucial to Napoli romping to the Serie A title this season, scoring 23 goals in 29 league games. Osimhen has done well against Chelsea in the past, scoring against them in the Champions League for Lille in 2019.

However it will not be easy to get the 24-year-old out of Napoli, who are likely to demand a huge fee. Napoli will want to make a strong title defence and hope to challenge in the Champions League after reaching the quarter-finals this season.

Chelsea need to sell themselves to potential targets given they will not be playing in Europe. They will face competition from Bayern Munich for Osimhen. Manchester United are interested but their top priority remains Tottenham's Harry Kane.

There could be concerns over whether Osimhen will adapt to English football. Chelsea will also need to work out what to do with Romelu Lukaku when the striker returns from his loan at Internazionale. It is unclear whether Lukaku, who will be handed a chance by Pochettino, will be loaned back to Inter. Chelsea will also need to move Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang.

Chelsea have several attacking midfielders and wide players but lack a focal point. Others on their shortlist include Inter's Lautaro Martínez and Brentford's Ivan Toney. In the search for a goalkeeper Chelsea regard Aston Villa's Emi Martínez, Brentford's David Raya and Inter's André Onana as possible replacements for Édouard Mendy and Kepa Arrizabalaga. The Brighton midfielders Alexis Mac Allister and Moisés Caicedo were targeted by Chelsea in January. Arsenal and United are leading the race to sign West Ham's Declan Rice.

Chelsea's incomings are likely to be relatively restrained, with a bigger focus on players leaving. The club have a bloated squad after spending wildly in the previous two transfer windows and are under pressure to raise funds because of concerns over financial fair play rules.



▲ *Victor Osimhen has scored 23 goals in Napoli's title-winning season*

Tottenham considering Steidten for director role

Fabrizio Romano
Jacob Steinberg

Tottenham's preferred three candidates for their sporting director role include Tim Steidten, who has held similar jobs at Bayer Leverkusen and Werder Bremen.

Steidten is out of work after leaving Leverkusen in March, just under four years after he joined from Bremen to head the scouting department. He was promoted from that role by Leverkusen last July.

Brentford's technical director Lee Dykes is also prominent in Tottenham's thoughts but it would require substantial compensation to bring him in. Dykes took up his position last summer after three years leading Brentford's recruitment department.

Brentford are in advanced talks to sign the Freiburg goalkeeper Mark Flekken, whose contract has a €13m (£11.3m) release clause. He is regarded as the successor to David Raya, who has turned down a new deal and is expected to leave. Brentford want £40m for the Spaniard, who hopes to stay in the Premier League.

West Ham are set to appoint a director of football in an attempt to address misgivings over their recent transfer strategy. A recruitment process is under way and changes are expected at the club this summer.

Potential candidates include Dykes, the former Liverpool sporting director Michael Edwards, Monaco's Paul Mitchell and Atalanta's Lee Congerton. There have been discussions with Victor Orta, who recently left Leeds, but he is regarded as an unlikely appointment.

West Ham, who are yet to decide whether to keep David Moyes as manager, have had a disappointing campaign despite spending close to £160m on players last summer.



▲ *Brentford are close to signing Freiburg goalkeeper Mark Flekken*

Results

Football

PREMIER LEAGUE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Manchester City	35	27	4	4	92	31	+61	**85**
Arsenal	36	25	6	5	83	42	+41	**81**
Newcastle	35	18	12	5	63	31	+32	**66**
Manchester Utd	35	20	6	9	51	41	+10	**66**
Liverpool	36	19	8	9	70	42	+28	**65**
Brighton	34	17	7	10	66	45	+21	**58**
Tottenham	36	17	6	13	65	59	+6	**57**
Aston Villa	36	17	6	13	48	44	+4	**57**
Brentford	36	13	14	9	54	45	+9	**53**
Fulham	36	15	6	15	52	49	+3	**51**
Chelsea	35	11	10	14	36	41	-5	**43**
Crystal Palace	36	11	10	15	37	46	-9	**43**
Wolves	36	11	7	18	30	52	-22	**40**
Bournemouth	36	11	6	19	37	69	-32	**39**
West Ham	36	10	7	19	38	52	-14	**37**
Nottm Forest	36	8	10	18	36	67	-31	**34**
Everton	36	7	11	18	32	56	-24	**32**
Leeds	36	7	10	19	46	71	-25	**31**
Leicester	36	8	6	22	49	67	-18	**30**
Southampton **R**	36	6	6	24	31	66	-35	**24**

Liverpool (2) **3** **Leicester** (0) **0**
Jones 33 36
Alexander-Arnold 71
32,225

IRISH PREMIER DIVISION
Derry City 3 Dundalk 0; Shamrock Rovers 3 St Patrick's 2

LA LIGA
Real Betis 3 Rayo Vallecano 1

SERIE A
Sampdoria 1 Empoli 1

Tennis

ATP/WTA INTERNAZIONALI BNL D'ITALIA (Rome)

Singles: Men: Third round: Y Hanfmann (Ger) bt M Cecchinato (It) 6-4 4-6 6-3; **B Coric** (Cro) bt R Carballés Baena (Sp) 7-6 (3) 6-1; **F Marozsan** (Hun) bt C Alcaraz (Sp) 6-3 7-6 (4); **A Rublev** (Rus) bt A Davidovich Fokina (Sp) 7-6 (8) 6-3; **D Medvedev** (Rus) bt B Zapata Mirralles (Sp) 3-6 6-1 6-3

Women: Fourth round: A Kallinina (Ukr) bt M Keys (US) 2-6 6-2 6-4; **Zheng Q** (Chn) bt Wang Xiy (Chn) 6-4 3-6 6-1; **B Haddad Maia** (Br) bt C Osorio (Col) 6-3 6-3; **V Kudermetova** (Rus) bt M Bouzkova (Cz) 6-2 6-2; **E Rybakina** (Kaz) bt M Vondrousova (Cz) 6-3 6-3; **J Ostapenko** (Lat) bt D Kasatkina (Rus) 6-4 4-6 6-0

Doubles: Men: Second round: J Murray & M Venus (GB/Aus) bt M Arévalo & J Rojer (ElS/Neth) 7-6 (7) 4-6 10-2; **A De Minaur & J Kubler** (Aus) bt R Bopanna & M Edben (Ind/Aus) 2-6 7-6 (8) 12-10; **M Granollers & H Zeballos** (Sp/Arg) bt D Evans & B Shelton (GB/US) 6-1 7-6 (1); **H Nys & J Zielinski** (Fr/Pol) bt I Dodig & A Krajicek (Cro/US) 7-6 (3) 6-2; **R Ram & J Salisbury** (US/GB) bt A Pellegrino & A Vavassori (It) 7-6 (1) 6-7 (1) 10-7

Women: Second round: S Aoyama & E Shibahara (Jpn) bt E Alexandrova & A Potapova (Rus) 6-3 6-3; **U Eikeri & M Kato** (Nor/Jpn) bt M Niculescu & M Ninomiya (Rom/Jpn) 6-4 4-6 10-6

Quarter-finals: S Hunter & E Mertens (Aus/Bel) bt T Babos & A Danilina (Hun/Kaz) 6-4 6-2

Golf

LPGA COGNIZANT FOUNDERS CUP (Clifton, New Jersey)
Leading final scores (US unless stated): **275** Ko J-y (Kor) 68 68 72 67 (won after 1st play-off hole); M Lee (Aus) 68 69 67 71. **278** A Buhai (SA) 71 69 68 70. **280** Ryu H-w (Kor) 67 70 70 73. **281** A Thitikul (Tha) 68 73 69 71; A Yin 69 70 68 74; A Ashok (Ind) 69 68 71 73. **282** N Hataoka (Jpn) 68 71 71 72. **283** C Knight 68 70 71 74. **284** M Sagstroem (Swe) 71 69 75 69; G Hall (Eng) 71 69 71 73; G Kim (Aus) 69 72 68 75.

AT&T BYRON NELSON (McKinney, Texas)
Leading final scores (US unless stated): **261** J Day (Aus) 64 69 66 62. **262** A Eckroat 69 65 63 65; Kim S-w (Kor) 65 66 68 63. **263** Pan C-t (Tai) 67 66 68 62. **264** Dou Z (Chn) 63 70 64 67; T Hatton (Eng) 68 67 65 64; S Scheffler 64 64 71 65. **265** V Norrman (Swe) 68 66 65 66; R Palmer 64 65 68 68; A Scott (Aus) 63 71 68 63. **266** S Jaeger (Ger) 67 71 65 63; K Tway 66 71 66 63; R Werenski 64 68 68 66.

Ice hockey

IIHF WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS (Finland/Latvia)
Group A: Germany 2 USA 3; Finland 1 Sweden 1 aot (Sweden win 3-2 on penalties)
Group B: Slovakia 1 Canada 1 aot (Canada win 3-2 on penalties); Czech Republic 3 Latvia 4 aot

NHL
Playoffs: Quarter-finals: Edmonton 2 Vegas 5 (Vegas win best-of-seven series 4-2)

Baseball

MLB
Boston 1 St Louis 9

Fixtures

Football (7.45pm unless stated)
Uefa Champions League
Semi-final: Second leg Internazionale (2) v Milan (0) (8pm)
Sky Bet Championship playoffs
Semi-final: Second leg Luton (1) v Sunderland (2) (8pm)
cinch Scottish League One playoffs
Final: First leg Annan Athletic v Clyde (7.35pm)

Greg Wood's racing tips

Chepstow **1.30** Bantry **2.05** Vidi Vici **2.40** Peachey Carnehan **3.15** Rich Rhythm **3.50** Moveonup **4.25** Ivy Avenue **4.55** Sympathise
Newcastle **1.40** Special Rate **2.15** Fourth Of July **2.50** Starlyte **3.25** Marshalled **4.00** Deluxe Range **4.35** Magic Mike **5.10** Red Vision **5.45** Tommy Time
Beverley **1.50** Rowayeh **2.25** Bombay Bazaar **3.00** Montelusa **3.35** Gustav Graves **4.10** Jazz Samba **4.45** Blueflagflyinghigh **5.20** Book Of Tales
Wetherby **4.50** Marroof **5.25** Gold Guy **6.00** Platinum Girl **6.30** Al Baahy **7.00** Morning Sun **7.30** Bert Kibbler **8.05** Swinging Eddie **8.40** Premiership
Sandown **5.40** Miss Mach One **6.15** Enochdhu (nb) **6.45** Finn's Charm **7.15** Artistic Star **7.45** If Not Now **8.20** Gert Lush (nap)

Exiles exiled?
London Irish may be thrown out of league, warns RFU



Page 33 →

Injury fears
Stokes unable to bowl as England suffer another setback

Page 33 →



The Guardian
Tuesday
16 May
2023

Sport



Trent rockets Reds towards top-four spot



Leicester	Liverpool
0	3

Trent Alexander-Arnold enjoys his goal with Ibrahima Konaté but James Maddison is left dejected
Match report *Page 36* →

CARL RECINE/REUTERS

Case for defence
PFA seeks legal advice for players during pitch invasions

Sean Ingle

The Professional Footballers' Association has sought legal advice over whether players attacked by supporters can use reasonable force to defend themselves.

It comes amid heightened concerns of further incidents during the English Football League playoff second legs and the final fortnight of the Premier League season, after the Newcastle manager, Eddie Howe, was confronted on Saturday by a Leeds supporter. It is understood there is growing concern among some PFA members over an apparent lack of legal protections for players - and also what would constitute "reasonable force" if a player feels under threat during a crowd invasion.

The PFA has promised in an email to its members, seen by the Guardian, to back its players if there is any incident. "As your trade union, we are here to support you and we have taken legal guidance on your rights in the event of mass pitch invasions such as those that occurred last year," the email states. "Harassment, assaults and attacks by spectators are never justified and they are never the 'fault' of the player."

It is understood particular concerns were raised by PFA members after the court case involving Oli McBurnie following the Nottingham Forest v Sheffield United game at the end of last season, where Sheffield United's Billy Sharp was assaulted. McBurnie was cleared of stamping on a pitch-invading fan. Several other players and staff were attacked or harassed by spectators during pitch invasions at last year's playoffs and when Everton avoided relegation from the Premier League, leading players to express a lack of confidence in the effectiveness of stewarding.

Last July the Premier League, EFL and Football Association announced that pitch invaders would be banned from stadiums and reported to police. Incidents have continued this season, including when Bradford's Andy Cook was confronted by a Stevenage supporter after he scored in February. In January the Arsenal goalkeeper Aaron Ramsdale was kicked at Tottenham by a fan who had made his way on to the perimeter barrier.

The playoff second legs begin today. The PFA has reminded players of their rights to be told of security plans and to take action if they believe the environment is unsafe. "We have been clear with the authorities that too many of these incidents are still happening, with players left to look after themselves and stewards and security often too slow to respond."

Athletes need welfare body, gymnastics chair urges

Sean Ingle

The chair of British Gymnastics has called on the government to establish an independent welfare body to protect athletes across all sports - and to ensure governing bodies no longer face significant costs dealing with safeguarding cases.

In a notable intervention, Mike Darcey said that while the benefits of playing sport were clear, the number of abuse allegations across multiple sports in recent years - including British Cycling, British Swimming, British Bobsleigh and British Athletics - showed the current system often left complainants in limbo while they waited for justice.

"It's time we bit the bullet," Darcey told the Guardian. "It's time for the government to accept that it is time for action. We need, as a nation, to show that we care as much about athlete welfare as we do about the medal table."

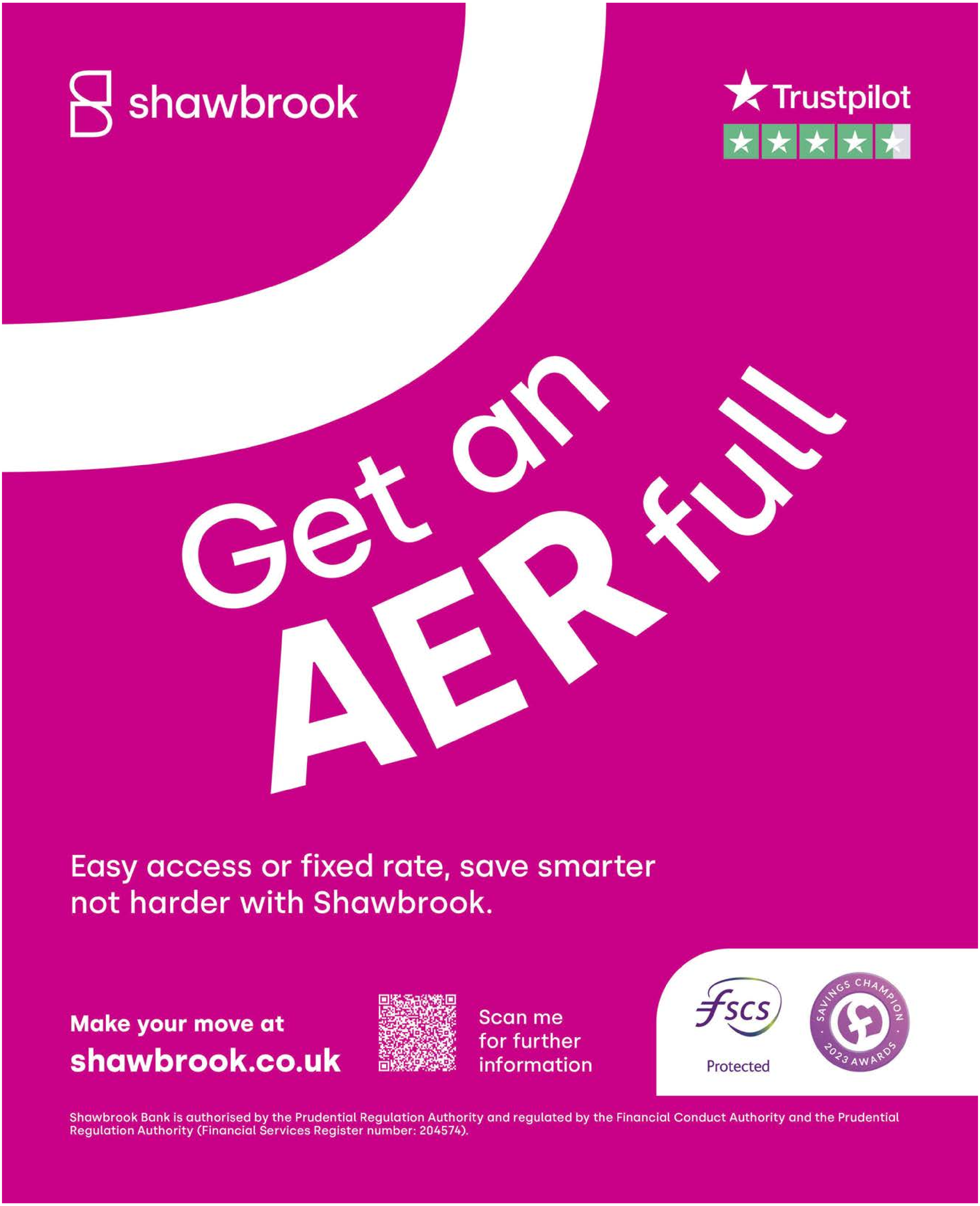
Darcey said he envisioned the new body as being like UK Anti-Doping - which would not only include investigators, safeguarding experts and adjudicators but also ensure best safe sport practice was promoted across British sport. "Such a body would also have clear economies of scale," he said. "Instead of asking 40 different Olympic sports to run their own systems we could have one centralised body as a centre of excellence. We would also take the conflict of interest out of the system."

Darcey said that although British Gymnastics was now spending more than £1m a year on welfare and safeguarding in the wake of the Whyte Review - which found horrifying cases of bullying, abuse and discrimination - it was still struggling to deal with all the 1,326 concerns raised with its welfare and safe sport team since July 2020. "We have a very substantial backlog, and complaints are running at an elevated level because there's much

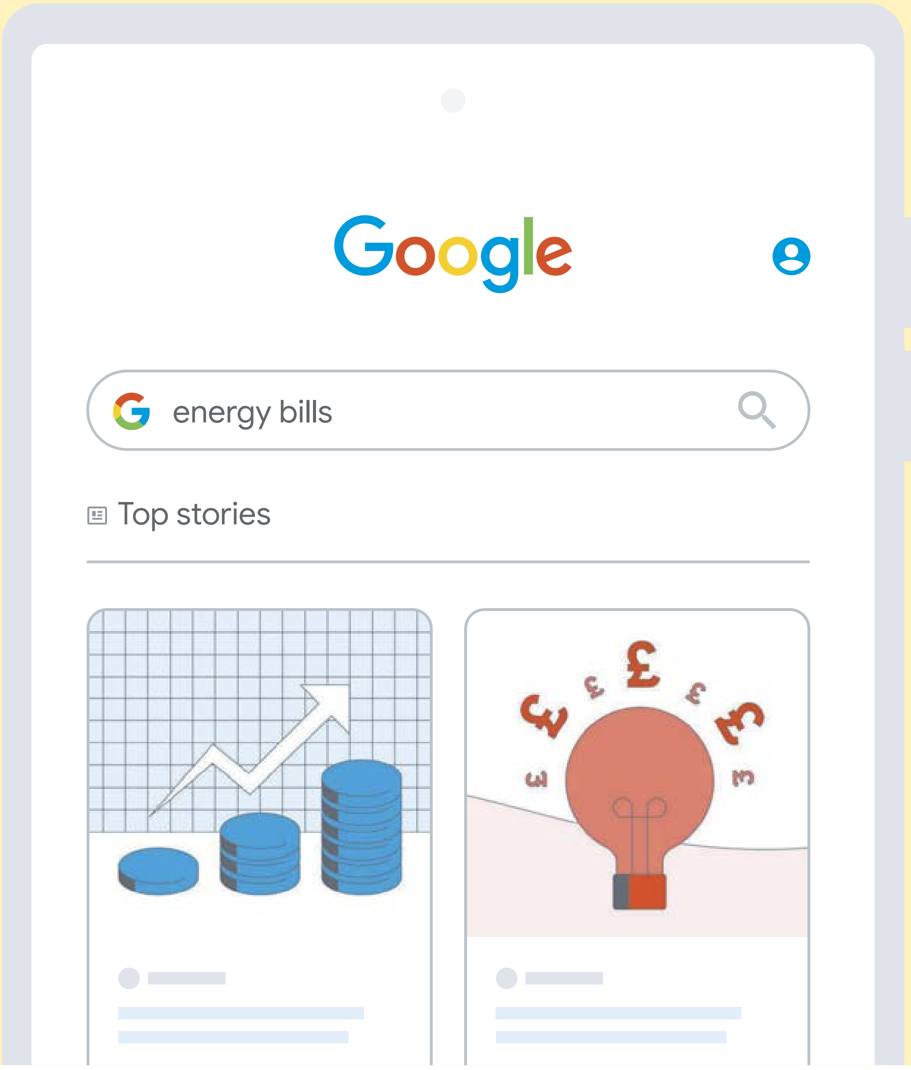
32 →



▲ *British Gymnastics has struggled to deal with all the concerns raised*


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*450% UK increase in the past 12 months, correct at 20 March 2023.

Sunak may aid Zelenskiy's war, but Germany is pivotal *John Kampfner, page 3*

An issue that should transcend party politics *Nicola Sturgeon, page 4*

Can Japanese knotweed ever be eradicated? *The long read, page 5*

G2 Daily pullout life & arts section *Inside*

The Guardian Tuesday 16 May 2023

Journal

Opinion and ideas

The Tories are reeling. Now for Labour to prepare a killer blow

Polly Toynbee



How rare it is to be able to pinpoint the precise day you witnessed the winds of change sweeping away the old political landscape. As I wrote just before this month's local elections, I felt that great doorstep surge in Lightwater, in Michael Gove's Surrey Heath constituency. Sure enough, those angry voters deserted his party in droves, giving the Liberal Democrats control of the council.

What's Gove's response to his voters' rebellion? He ignores it, heading off to the wilder shores of the rightwingery that has just been rejected, to speak at the National Conservatism three-day jamboree in Westminster. This low-tax, small-state religio-populism is on another planet from Gove's constituents. With other senior colleagues who also attended, they reveal how little they have absorbed of views expressed through the ballot box at the local elections.

The home secretary, Suella Braverman, might pause to ask how the Tories lost symbolic Dover, given that she thinks the small boats issue is the hottest around. Instead of heading for east Kent to rethink, she took to the NatCon platform to complain about British people forgetting how to work, leaving it to migrants she calls criminals lacking "our values".

Facing an electoral abyss brings out bizarre behaviour in political parties, with ideologues retreating into realms of fantasy unshared by voters. Tory revolutionaries provide Labour party members with a reminder of themselves when they turned unelectable under Michael Foot or Jeremy Corbyn. Then, Labour convinced itself that the voters only rejected its recipes because they weren't pungent enough.

Only cognitive dissonance lets these Tories ignore last week's triumph of progressive parties. This usually conservative country rejected their rightwing austerity government, the English vote going 60% progressive against 29% Tory. Polls show a quarter of Lib Dem voters saying they will tactically turn Labour in a general election – that's outright victory territory. Alas, Keir Starmer said at the weekend that electoral reform was "not one of [his] priorities": but at least he didn't absolutely rule it out, for tactical voting on this scale reflects high public support for a proportional system.

Although his party was demolished at the polls, Rishi Sunak is probably not in peril. But he's lost control, with his five pledges already failing. As Starmer mocked, in an aside to a questioner this weekend: "You don't have Suella Braverman in your cabinet on merit, but because you've lost control of your party."

That brutal quip signalled how success gives an opposition leader new buoyancy. Starmer's aides say he is "emboldened", and so he was in his speech to Progressive Britain. A stronger note of radicalism saw him shed some of the over-caution that has weighed him down.

The Tories are reeling. Now for Labour to prepare a killer blow

Polly Toynbee

← Continued from front

Of course he warned that as a distance runner "the hardest yards always come at the end", but "make no mistake - we are on track. We are on a path towards power." And so they are.

That path was mapped out in stolid Starmer steps from day one. After 2019's worst defeat in living memory ripped out Labour heartlands, he has made his party virtually unbeatable in a journey that took Neil Kinnock, John Smith and Tony Blair aeons longer. Ruthlessly scotching internal turmoil, he has remade a party in his own image, with candidates and party officials sometimes bruisingly sealed with his own stamp. To borrow from George W Bush, too many have "misunderestimated" him, both his strategic nous and his radical intent: these results should stop that.

True, he faces a Tory party that has taken leave of its senses, driving the country to near-perdition, but he warns it's "not enough that we're better than the Tories". Describing the barren landscape he'll inherit, he promised as great a transformation as those achieved by Clement Attlee, Harold Wilson and Blair's Labour governments. Momentum's remnants grumble that he offers no more than "New Labour reruns", but they should hope he can cut child and pensioner poverty by a million people; revive benefits, Sure Start programmes for tots and further education colleges; and renew local museums and grassroots sport to outdo New Labour's 13 abundant years from 1997 to 2010. It will be harder this time.

"Where's the beef?" Nick Ferrari kept asking Starmer on LBC yesterday, echoing people impatient for more policy announcements. Yet that £28bn a year on green growth and insulation is big, and his mission to raise UK growth from the bottom to the top of the G7 in one term is frighteningly enormous. So, too, are pledges to achieve 100% clean energy by 2030, fix the broken NHS, create a National Social Care service and provide quality childcare. The Labour revolution in working rights, fair pay deals, zero-hours contracts and unions allowed into every workplace will change the balance of power at work.

Branding Labour the "party of the common good" in his speech to Progressive Britain is a reminder that it will take back each rail contract and create a Great British Energy, with Rachel Reeves promising "radical insourcing" of services. Starmer will keep hammering away at "security" for all - in jobs, housing and income in hard times - as he parks on vacated Tory turf. The Tories "conserve nothing of value - not our rivers and seas, not our NHS or BBC, not our families, not our nation", he said in his speech. VAT on private schools to be diverted to stricken state schools; the funds raised by ending non-dom tax avoidance to be used for the NHS; a windfall tax on oil giants' profits - these are all just tasters of Starmer's radical vision.

Bored with them already? That's a good reason for Labour not to announce plans too early, timing policy to breast the tape at the election. Expect more detailed announcements shortly on health and the environment, quickening the pace at the party conference in October. But don't expect tax and spend details until the March budget shows the Tories' hand.

Glum Tory newspaper leaders warn, "Only a bold vision can save the Tories now", though they can only produce very old ideas for rich people: "A commitment to axe inheritance tax. An end to stamp duty. A renewed bonfire of EU red tape."

Starmer gets the same "bold vision" moan, but hoary old ideological totems don't win against practical policies - hope comes from concrete change for better lives and public services. Too dull? No "Oh, Keir Starmer!" Glastonbury chants? He just brings home the boring old votes, votes and more votes from Blackpool to Middlesbrough, Medway to Brighton.

There is something beseeching about Sunak's "morale-boosting" garden party last night at No 10 for his MPs. It won't appease rightwing Tory fanatics, nor ease the panic of all who saw their seats start to vanish before their eyes last week. Deluded and dispirited: as the Tories are now, so once was Labour.

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Politics

Rishi Sunak should be as exercised by Conservative splits as by the opposition

The length of time a party has been in power can equally make or break a premiership: it is far harder to make a mark coming to office at the end of a long period of dominance. Rishi Sunak is learning that lesson. Since last October he has been righting the listing Conservative ship. However, the losses his party suffered at the hands of opponents in May's local elections have emboldened four distinct groups of critical voices within his party: former prime ministers; thwarted ex-ministers; the Tory right and ambitious frontbenchers jockeying to lead the party after Mr Sunak has gone. The prime minister looks as if he may about to become as exercised by splits within his own party as by the challenge posed by the official opposition.

The prime minister could dismiss as symbolic Theresa May's sit-in protest at the base of the throne in the House of Lords last week over the government's new asylum bill. He might brush off former home secretary Priti Patel's claim that Boris Johnson would win the next election as sour grapes. But Downing Street will be more concerned that the Tory right is still smarting over the implosion of the Truss regime. Its collapse interrupted political careers that cannot be resumed unless Mr Sunak's grip on power is loosened.

A majority in parliament ought to mean Mr Sunak can take major decisions without taking the cabinet with him - relying instead on his own small inner circle in No 10. Yet it is the party in the country, one stuffed with councillors sullen from defeat, which looks like becoming a challenge to his authority. Party members look at the polls and want to see their passions being stirred for the fight ahead. The danger is that Mr Sunak seems to prefer book-keeping to boosterism. His team have coalesced around the prime minister's minimal programme, but with little enthusiasm.

What seems to exercise ambitious cabinet ministers is not the thought of running the state but pleasing the Conservative party's core voters. That is why the home secretary, Suella Braverman, says migration ought to be going down whatever the cost to the country or why the chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, says that the tax burden is too high. Instead of coming clean with the electorate that 13 years of Tory government has produced the opposite of what was promised, cabinet ministers are making their excuses.

Rishi Sunak is in power to clear up a mess that he helped create. Unfortunately for him realism does not play well in a party still gripped by Brexit fantasies. When the business secretary, Kemi Badenoch, faced up to reality and told MPs she couldn't abolish more than 4,000 EU laws - covering workers' rights, environmental protection and food standards - by the end of the year as promised, the government's actions were compared to the treachery of the medieval Borgias by her predecessor, Jacob Rees-Mogg.

With time running out, the Conservative party looks like it has nowhere else to turn. Most voters are confronted daily by rising housing and food costs, falling real wages and the parlous condition of public services - particularly the NHS. They would like to hear less about "radical left" fairy tales from those who think Tory politics part of a rightwing entertainment business. Mr Sunak's problem is that he personifies the policies that left the country in such dire straits, rather than a departure from them.

Turkey

The president's first-round victory may be another step towards autocracy

In the lead-up to Turkey's presidential election on Sunday, there seemed to be good grounds to believe that voters were about to turn their back on Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's authoritarian brand of nationalism. His assumption of quasi-monarchical presidential powers in 2018 had succeeded in uniting a perennially divided opposition against him. Polls suggested a close race, but placed the president's main rival for power, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, significantly ahead. Requiring a vote above 50% to win outright and avoid a runoff, Mr Kılıçdaroğlu's declared aspiration was to "finish it in the first round".

That optimism has turned out to be sadly misplaced. As it transpired, it was Mr Erdoğan who almost won at the first time of asking, winning over 49% of votes to Mr Kılıçdaroğlu's 45%. The coalition led by the president's Justice and Development party (AKP) is also set to win a surprise majority in the Grand National Assembly. That outcome will stymie opposition attempts to restore parliamentary democracy to Turkey, irrespective of the result of the presidential runoff in a fortnight's time.

Mr Kılıçdaroğlu's race is not yet run. But a combination of incumbency advantage, and the momentum provided by the AKP's win in parliament, means that Mr Erdoğan is now likely to extend his increasingly autocratic rule into a third decade. This despite an inflation rate running close to 50% as a result of his refusal to raise interest rates, and widespread disillusionment at the government's sluggish response to the devastating earthquakes three months ago.

For Europe and the US, which had hoped an opposition victory would see Turkey turn more towards the west, five more years of Mr Erdoğan would be a highly unwelcome development - particularly ahead of a decisive period in Ukraine. For those likely to suffer further erosion of their civil rights in Mr Erdoğan's increasingly illiberal democracy, Sunday's setback is a bitter disappointment and an ominous portent. Turkey's Kurdish minority population, dissidents, journalists, women's rights campaigners and LGBTQ+ people have all been subject to political repression in recent years, as the president has shored up his popularity through culture wars and a focus on terrorism and security. If Mr Erdoğan survives this, the most concerted and unified democratic challenge to his power to date, the temptation to move Turkey further down the road towards full-blown autocracy will be considerable.

Mr Kılıçdaroğlu's deflated alliance has two weeks to shift the dial in a presidential race that has confounded its expectations. In the context of a hostile media overwhelmingly biased in favour of Mr Erdoğan, that will be a very tall order. If the opposition is to succeed, it will need to make inroads among less well-off nationalist voters outside the cities, who appear to have responded to pre-election measures to mitigate the crisis caused by soaring inflation. Last week, Mr Erdoğan announced a 45% pay hike for public sector workers, the latest in a series of moves including a reduction in electricity prices, and the offer of a month's free natural gas to households. Notwithstanding the economic pain caused by out-of-control inflation, Mr Erdoğan persuaded the religious conservative working class that he remains the best leader to protect their interests. Unless Mr Kılıçdaroğlu can convince enough of them otherwise, the medium-term prospects for Turkish democracy look bleak.



Sunak may aid Zelenskiy's war, but Germany will be pivotal

John Kampfner



Unlike British or French politicians, Olaf Scholz doesn't do pomp. Nor does he do charm. A man who screws up his eyes when he tries to smile, the German chancellor welcomed Ukraine's president to Berlin on Sunday with characteristic stiffness. Yet of all Volodymyr Zelenskiy's meetings with fellow European leaders over the past few days - from Rome to Paris to Chequers yesterday for more hardware and more embraces with Rishi Sunak - his day in Germany may be remembered as the most important. The announcement on the eve of his visit of a doubling of military aid to Ukraine to a total of more than €5bn (£4.4bn) finally brings Germany in from the cold. The consequences may take months to be seen on the battlefield, but in geostrategic terms they are immediate.

Zelenskiy knows he has perhaps only six to eight months for his counteroffensive to make sufficient inroads to force Russia out of the areas it seized in 2022 and, better still, out of lands it annexed in 2014. Doing this would also demonstrate to the west the effectiveness of the support given so far. He knows that if he cannot finish the job this year, he will have to continue next year in even more difficult circumstances.

He sees the Chinese, the French and others showboating diplomacy not necessarily on Ukraine's terms. At the same time he is aware that public opinion in several countries is wavering. Most of all, he sees the lumbering figure of Donald Trump coming into view. Even just the prospect of a return to the White House of a man who cannot say which side he supports provides succour to Vladimir Putin and the forces on the far right and far left in Europe who put the vague notion of "peace" ahead of international law, self-determination and human rights.

That is why the debate in Europe, and Germany in particular, is so important. Germans are told to pull their weight but not to throw their weight about. They pride themselves on *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, their coming to terms with their past. Yet in recent years among some sections of society, particularly Scholz's Social Democrats, one wrong lesson was learned. These "salon pacifists" reinterpreted the phrase

Volodymyr Zelenskiy, left, with Olaf Scholz in Aachen, Germany, on Sunday
PHOTOGRAPH: FEDERICO GAMBARINI/ REUTERS

*

John Kampfner *is the author of Blair's Wars and Why the Germans Do It Better*

> **There's an awareness of the transformation required to make Germany the major military player Nato needs it to be**

"never again" to mean never again going to war, even if that meant failing to confront tyranny. The terrible invasion of Iraq vindicated that view.

Ukraine has now shattered that, inserting a concept alien to several generations of "the good war". But it has required two heaves to get there. The first was the *Zeitenwende*, the speech Scholz gave three days after Putin's invasion, in which he declared a new approach to hard power and an extra €100bn to be spent on reinforcing Germany's ailing armed forces.

Having broken the mould so dramatically, the German chancellor returned to type, second-guessing each step, fearful of a backlash from his party. Relations became so toxic that the German president, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, was prevented by the Ukrainians at the last moment from visiting Kyiv. Zelenskiy feted all comers, but froze out the Germans, who complained they were not getting the credit for being one of the largest donors of military aid, amounting to more than €2bn. The problem was that it was offered grudgingly and delivered slowly.

Tensions reached a high in the autumn over the stalled delivery of German-made Leopard 2 tanks. Not only did Scholz refuse to send them, but he also held back re-export licences so that other countries couldn't send the tanks to Ukraine. He eventually relented, arguing that his position had forced the Americans to release tanks, too.

So why this change of heart and is it irrevocable? Several factors in recent months have transformed the relationship between Germany and Ukraine. One is the appointment of Boris Pistorius, the first defence minister in years to get to grips with the transformation required to make Germany the major military player Nato needs it to be. Speaking at a conference last week, one of Germany's leading diplomats, Thomas Bagger, who will shortly take over as the top official at the foreign ministry, said: "My country is now on a path to correct what in hindsight was its biggest mistake." Announcing the new €3bn package of measures for Ukraine, Pistorius declared: "Germany will provide all the help it can, for as long as it takes."

People around Scholz argue that if he had been more gung-ho, he would not have brought the German people with him. Meanwhile, his foreign ministry and now his defence ministry are showing greater mettle, not just towards Russia, but also in navigating the increasingly difficult dilemma about China as a business opportunity and a security threat.

On Sunday evening, Zelenskiy was in the beautiful medieval city of Aachen to receive the Charlemagne prize for services to Europe. Before an audience of luminaries, he spoke not just about the war, but about Ukraine's place in the European Union.

That is why, if - and it remains a huge if - Ukraine prevails and wins the war, its biggest goal will be accession to the EU, and the role of Germany (and France and Poland) will be so pivotal. The UK, sadly, will not be at the table. As for Scholz, every time he was referred to warmly by Zelenskiy in his speech ("my friend Olaf"), the chancellor appeared to fidget with his headphones or tie. He may not be able to do human, but he is the most important human being the Ukrainians will have to do business with.



An issue that must transcend party politics

Nicola Sturgeon

In February, one of the reasons I gave for my decision to stand down as first minister was a concern about the part I might be playing, however unwittingly, in the polarisation of our politics. Polarised, often highly toxic, public discourse is not a uniquely Scottish phenomenon. And by no stretch of the imagination was I the sole or even primary cause of it in Scotland. But I had come to feel that the duration of my time in the trenches of frontline politics was making it harder for me to broker the common ground necessary to advance difficult or controversial policy changes.

It is now almost two months since I left office and while that period hasn't unfolded exactly as I anticipated - for reasons I won't go into here - it has given me a different perspective. On the issue of polarisation, I think that, if anything, I underestimated the depth of the problem. That people have strong opinions and express them vehemently is to be celebrated. Give me passion over apathy any day. But it is depressingly striking in today's politics just how quickly people adopt fixed and immovable positions.

The reaction to the proposed pilot of judge-only rape trials in Scotland, part of a package of measures to improve access to justice for victims, is a case in point.

Before going further, full disclosure. I was first minister when the cabinet signed off the victims, witnesses and justice reform (Scotland) bill that includes this proposal. I support it. However, I also recognise that the arguments for and against are finely balanced - as is often the case with legislation seeking to tackle deep-seated problems.

Indeed, that is why the proposal is for a time-limited pilot only - to test whether or not judge-only trials could help address the deficit of justice in rape cases without compromising the right to a fair trial of those accused. But before the ink was even dry on the draft legislation and without a single word of debate in parliament, let alone the shape of the final proposal being known, fixed positions had been established.

I am not expecting, or even trying, to change minds with this article - but I am expressing a hope that it is not too late for us all to take a breath. This issue should be beyond party politics. Contrary to what has been suggested, it is not a politician-inspired plan to undermine the justice system. In fact, the proposal is based on a recommendation from Lady Dorrian, Scotland's second most senior judge.

And it seeks to address a genuine issue. In Scotland in 2020-21, of the 2,176 rapes or attempted rapes reported to police, only 152 gave rise to a prosecution. And of these, only 78 resulted in a conviction - a conviction rate for rape and attempted rape of just 51%, compared with 91% for offences overall.

The reasons are complex. But the impact of so-called "rape myths" can't be ignored: that a woman who was dressed a particular way, or had been drinking, or was in a relationship with her alleged attacker, must be at least partly to blame; that sex can only be rape if physical force is used - anything less implies consent; or that a woman who doesn't immediately report a rape to the police must be making it up.

Judges may be just as vulnerable to "rape myths" as juries - and as there is only one of them, rather than a whole panel of jurors, the impact may be greater.

Many points, for and against, must be considered and addressed. A judgment should be made at the end of that process on whether or not it is possible to design a pilot that might help tackle the denial of justice for rape victims, without compromising the rights of those accused of such crimes.

I hope we may yet proceed on that basis. It will require the government, as well as critics of the bill, to be prepared to keep an open mind. To that end, I was heartened to hear the justice secretary talk of the need for "sober and serious debate and scrutiny". She has said her door is open and should be taken at her word.

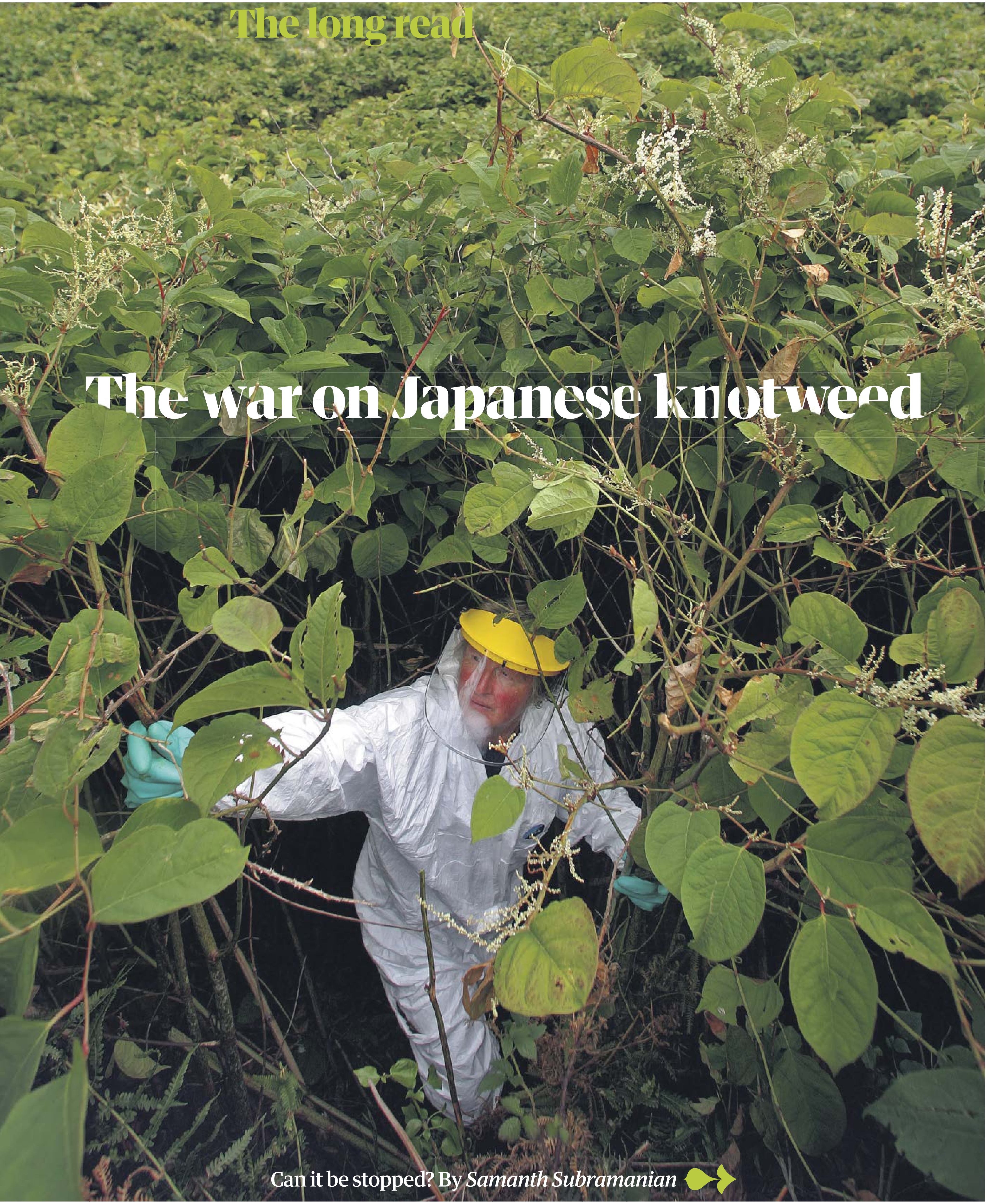
As the backbencher that I now am - albeit one who supports the bill - I am open to discussion on all aspects of it, and to supporting or tabling amendments that help allay concerns.

Above all, given the deeply serious issues the bill seeks to address, it would be good to think we might take the opportunity it offers to demonstrate that the descent into a polarised and therefore paralysed politics is not as inevitable as it seems. I live in hope.

✱ **Nicola Sturgeon** *is a member of the Scottish parliament and was first minister of Scotland between 2014 and 2023*

Support for anyone affected by rape or sexual abuse issues is available from rapecrisis.org.uk

The long read



The war on Japanese knotweed

Can it be stopped? By *Samanth Subramanian*

The long read



When Paul Ryb found himself a new home, in 2014, no one told him about the danger lurking in the garden. The flat, in the north London neighbourhood of Highgate, occupied the ground floor of a two-storey, brown-brick building. It had two bedrooms and a modest extension, but its truly splendid feature was a big, corner-plot garden. Ryb, a former investment banker, bought the flat for almost £1.3m and moved in mid-autumn 2014. His eyesight is severely impaired, so even more than most homebuyers, he had trusted his surveyor's report, which testified to the "excellent condition" and "very few defects" of the house. The next spring, though, when planting season began, his gardener took one look at the garden and gave him the bad news. He'd found three clumps of Japanese knotweed out there, which portended ruin for the garden. Refusing even to touch them, the gardener packed up his tools and left.

Knotweed spreads slowly but adamantly, and it can take over a patch of land until no other plants survive. Given time, the three stands of knotweed may have consumed Ryb's garden, so he had little choice but to hire workmen who dug out and carted away the knotweed and the soil beneath, at a cost of more than £10,000. Then he sued his surveyor. In 2019, a court awarded Ryb £50,000 in damages, citing not just the expense he had borne, but also his investment in the house and knotweed's aesthetic interference with his "ability fully to use and enjoy the land".

Knotweed has been a British plant since the 19th century, but as a species, it is still called "invasive" - a word referring not only to its origins abroad, in Japan, but also to how it has run riot through the country. Through many countries, in fact: across much of Europe and North America, knotweed has conquered woods and pasture, asphalt and urban wasteland. Unchecked, knotweed grows audaciously: it can rise by eight feet in the course of a single summer month. One biologist told me that she regularly came across doubledecker-sized colonies of knotweed during her fieldwork in northern France. Another expert, in Wales, recalled the biggest stand of knotweed he'd ever seen: a monster that straggled over 20,000 sq metres - nearly enough room to park four Boeing 747s. Some of the sites chosen for the 2012 Olympics had so much knotweed that it cost £70m to clean them up.

Lawn moss can be destroyed with iron sulphate, nettles can be pulled out, ivy can be chemically extinguished. Knotweed is nearly indomitable. It may be temporarily subdued - uprooted, mowed down, defoliated - and it can be controlled with poison, but it cannot easily be slain. This is a plant that survives the hot lava flows of volcanic eruptions. It is so formidable that even sober experts sometimes compare it to the triffid, from John Wyndham's 1951 novel The Day of the Triffids. Wyndham's triffids are mobile, sentient beings that stalk the country, stinging to death any humans they encounter. Forced off their land by these alien, indestructible plants, a band of survivors has to decamp to the Isle of Wight.

Unlike the triffid, knotweed will not so much drive you off your land as devalue it - a dire enough fate in the current property market. According to one estimate, 5% of UK homes are afflicted with knotweed, potentially slicing £20bn off their collective value. The official form that owners fill out while selling their houses now includes a specific question: "Is the property affected by Japanese knotweed?" Dissembling, or even ignorance, can be costly. Earlier this year, a court extracted £200,000 in damages from a man who sold his London home for £700,000 without copping to the knotweed in the garden. Ryb's legal counsel was a firm named Charles Lyndon, which was set up by the lawyer Rodger Burnett, after he had himself discovered knotweed in his newly purchased south London home. ("I didn't know what it was. My mum had come down to do a bit of gardening," Burnett told me, "and she looked out of the kitchen and said: 'What have you done? You've got knotweed. You're an idiot.'") Burnett's firm has handled hundreds of such cases, and there are several other lawyers who specialise in knotweed claims. One barrister referred to them as "wheelbarrow chasers".

As knotweed fanned out across British homes and gardens, it went from being a horticultural headache to an economic menace. Over the past decade and a half, as British wages languished, the only real wealth that many people gained lay in the homes they owned. When knotweed started corroding the value of these houses, their owners panicked. Lawyers sharpened their pencils. Botanists turned into consultants. Parliament convened committees. It was as if the country, having cohabited with knotweed for a century and a half, suddenly woke up to the fact that it was overrun, and set about trying to kill the unkillable weed.

On the ground, the state's soldiers against knotweed come in the form of people like Gethin Bowes, a stocky man with broad shoulders that look ideally contoured to bear a herbicide-spraying backpack. Until recently, Bowes worked for Caerphilly, a Welsh county borough skirted by the Rhymney River. It fell to Bowes to figure out courses of action for the 1 million sq metres of knotweed he'd mapped in Caerphilly. This was the largest knotweed monitoring project in the UK, perhaps in the world, and Bowes ran it almost entirely by himself.

Looking through Bowes' eyes, you see the world cleave into two: knotweed and everything else. One February afternoon, he gave me a tour of Caerphilly knotweed. In his Toyota pickup, we rode into town, past Caerphilly castle, down small village streets, and up into the hills speckled with sheep. On highways, he'd interrupt himself to point out, on the verges, knotweed stands he'd confronted. Frequently he pulled over, reached for his laptop and summoned old Google Maps satellite-view images to show how much denser the knotweed had been six or eight or 10 years ago, before he had ridden to the rescue. Once, as we went around a traffic island, he said: "We excavated a lot of knotweed while building this road, and packaged it in a membrane and buried it under there." This is, it should be said, a legitimate method of knotweed control. Even so, he brought to mind a mob stoolie dishing about where the bodies lay.

Other hardy invasives in Britain, such as the rhododendron or the Himalayan balsam, spread through seed. Knotweed produces seeds as well, but its singular weapon lies out of sight. Beneath the earth is its rhizome, a network of stems that grow laterally, sending up new shoots wherever they can. Bowes described the rhizome as the plant's "battery", a dense store of energy. Even when it has been shorn of its stalks, or suppressed by weedkiller, or trapped below concrete, a rhizome can stay dormant for as long as 20 years. This is why knotweed prospers - and why it preys on the mind. There is always the fear that it is merely lying in wait, ready to burst forth again.

Previous page: a specialist tackling knotweed in Cornwall

TIM CUFF/ALAMY



The root system of Japanese knotweed

DIMITRIS LEGAKIS/ATHENA PICTURES

Disturbing the rhizome in even the mildest way provokes it to grow; shredding it is like lopping off the head of a hydra. Even a thumbnail-size fragment of it, resembling raw, orange-coloured ginger, can generate a whole new plant. In excavating knotweed whole, as Ryb had to do, it becomes so vital to eradicate every last grain of rhizome that some surveyors have trained dogs to sniff it out underground. During such projects, Bowes carefully checks the blades of his machines and the tires of his vehicles, making certain that they won't bear away any rogue rhizome pieces.

When Bowes started in Caerphilly, in 2005, he was tasked only with preventing knotweed from overrunning native plants in the wild - along the banks of the rivers, and in pockets of woodland. But that was too narrow a front. Every major construction project in the region - highways, bridges, hospitals, railways - has had knotweed problems, and Bowes has dealt with nearly all of them. Bits of rhizome wash down the Rhymney, from knotweed stands upstream, and populate riverbanks. Knotweed blocks visibility on road verges, grows thickly in car parks and rears above the fences of private gardens. It may be successfully quashed on one plot of land, only to stretch laterally underground to spring up on the next plot over. Often, after a lull, Bowes found it had double-crossed him and reinfested the same plot. On a few occasions, Bowes has seen knotweed *inside* a building; once, a plant had found its way along a pipe or through a joint in the concrete to emerge next to a downstairs toilet.

In some heavily infested spots, to his immense satisfaction, Bowes hasn't seen new growth in more than 15 years. "If I'm entirely honest, I'd thought at the beginning: 'Well, a year of this, and then I'm going to do something else,'" Bowes said. "Sometimes I can't believe I've spent such a long time playing whack-a-mole with knotweed."

In its biological vigour, Japanese knotweed is a Darwinian champion. It starves smaller saplings by towering over them and blocking their sunlight. Its leaf litter secretes chemicals to impede the germination of other plants. Contrary to popular opinion, knotweed shoots can't break through solid concrete or weaken the foundations of buildings, but they can push through cracks in bricks, concrete or road surfaces. During winter, knotweed loses its leaves, and its brown canes resemble slim, desiccated fingers of bamboo. At the hot height of summer, it is at its most luxuriant. Its leaves, shaped like cartoon hearts, can be bigger than a human hand, and its small, creamy flowers emerge in tufts just before autumn.

During his time with the Caerphilly council, Bowes' years followed a seasonal order. When I met him in February, he said: "I'll check my phone now, after a couple of hours, and I'll have maybe two voicemail messages. By May Day, I'll come back to my phone and see 25 voicemails. All of them saying: 'I've seen knotweed here,' or 'There's knotweed growing here.'" Through the summer, until October, Bowes used to be out every rainless day - even weekends and bank holidays - spraying glyphosate, monitoring old sites he'd treated, or reconnoitring new stands of knotweed. "We skipped the day of the Queen's funeral," he said. "The herbicide sprayer has a petrol engine that's quite noisy, so we thought it wouldn't be respectful." It had been a perfect day for spraying, too, he added, regretfully. (This summer, for the coronation, the council had a battery-powered sprayer.) The work was hot and exhausting. Sometimes, Bowes had to don his PPE - overalls, gloves, waders up to his chest - and scramble down a steep bank with a 20kg tank of



Dr Dan Jones in his laboratory field near the River Taff in south Wales
DIMITRIS LEGAKIS/ ATHENA PICTURES

glyphosate on his back, then walk along the shallow reaches of a river to reach his knotweed.

Glyphosate, Bowes' preferred poison, is the most heavily used herbicide in history, but it is still a subject of contention. Extinction Rebellion wants it banned, the World Health Organization thinks it is "probably carcinogenic to humans", and Monsanto, its manufacturer, has lost lawsuits over its health impacts. The US Environmental Protection Agency, though, insists that glyphosate is unlikely to be carcinogenic.

Over the years, Bowes has developed a curious intimacy with his quarry. Once he cooked young knotweed into a crumble. The shoots had the texture of rhubarb, he said, but were "much more earthy and not very nice". He has spent nearly two decades scuffling with this plant, yet it defies his absolute mastery, leaving him half admiring, half leery. We often assume we understand more about the natural world than we really do, or have more power over it than we actually possess. That overconfidence is invariably punctured: knotweed covers a country, a virus escapes a wet market, a forest burns. At that point, we realise we know too little - and yet, to mend these worst results of our ignorance, we have to try imposing our will on nature all over again.

In the archives at Kew Gardens, there are volumes called Inwards Books: old, fat, marvellous ledgers listing the plants received by the gardens over the centuries. One of these books records the arrival, on 9 August 1850, of a set of 40 plants from a nursery in Leiden. The nursery was run by a German doctor named Philipp Franz von Siebold, who, after a stint in Japan, had brought back sheaves of exotic plants - among them knotweed, which, in an act of self-advertising, he'd named *Polygonum sieboldii*. In that 9 August entry, written out in spidery cursive, *P. sieboldii* shows up as item 34. It is the earliest available record of knotweed's arrival on British shores.

'I've seen people pour boiling water on it, or salting it. The salt will kill everything for ever, except the knotweed'

At the time, no one had a sense of foreign plants as invasives, as agents that could overwhelm domestic ecosystems, says Keith Alcorn, a historian of gardens. Through the second half of the 19th century, knotweed vendors praised the plant's ability to stabilise sand dunes, bear flowers suited for bouquets and feed cattle. And when, in this same period, the wild gardening movement began, its founder, William Robinson, recommended knotweed for looking "handsome in rough places in the wild garden". Alcorn told me: "I haven't come across any writing from before 1921 that said: 'On no account allow this plant.'"

One scholar referred to what happened next, in the early and mid-20th century, as "the escape": knotweed breaking loose of well-tended gardens and multiplying through cities and countryside alike. It prospered on riverbanks, in cinder tips and untended lots. Inadvertently, people helped the knotweed along by moving around vast quantities of earth in which pieces of rhizome lay hidden, like a sixpence in a Christmas pudding. In Welsh coal country, around the tin mines of Cornwall, alongside roads and highways, next to shipyards and railroad tracks - everywhere that industrial activity went, knotweed followed.

A 1977 paper, published in the Botanical Society's journal, shows the takeover in four maps. In the first, apart from a cluster of black knotweed dots in western Wales, Britain is largely free of the plant around 1900; in the fourth, from 1976, England and Wales are festooned with knotweed, and the dots have climbed so far north that even the Orkney and Shetland Islands aren't spared. A 2021 study divided the island of Britain into 3,893 equal squares by area. Knotweed had affected 3,134 of those squares.

All of this might have remained largely invisible to the urban public, as nature's developments often do. Who pays attention, after all, to the flora on a railway embankment as it flashes past the train's window? But then knotweed began to hurt house prices, and the property market, hard-headed and beady-eyed, decided it would brook no knotweed.

In 1986, Philip Santo began working with Abbey National building society as a surveyor, valuing homes before it issued a mortgage. And that was how, in the autumn of 1995, he came upon his first residential knotweed: a small stand just outside a house in Dorset. "I may have mentioned it in passing in my report," Santo recalled. He didn't recommend any steps to deal with it - partly because, at the time, no one knew how best to deal with knotweed, but also because it wasn't yet a pressing concern. The knotweed remained on the Dorset house's doorstep.

But in the years thereafter, property valuations soared. The average house price in England and Wales tripled between 1995 and 2016. By the end of that two-decade span, the stakes had grown so great, Santo said, that the difference between two otherwise-identical houses - one with knotweed, the other knotweed-free - could run to tens of thousands of pounds. And still, remarkably for a plant that had been in the country for 150 years, no one knew the precise degree of peril that knotweed posed. How close could knotweed get before it eroded the value of your home? How could knotweed be beaten back? If a lender had to repossess a knotweed-infested house, how much less would it be worth?

Banks dislike such uncertainty. In 2010, Santander announced it would no longer finance the purchase of any homes in which knotweed had been found. "They were saying: 'We don't know the risk, therefore we will not lend,'" Santo said. Other banks followed Santander's example, to public alarm. It didn't help, Santo added, that the media often got knotweed wrong, portraying it as a plant that destroys houses.

In 2012, trying to help banks weigh the risks of knotweed, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) published a protocol deeming any knotweed within a seven-metre radius to be a threat to property values. It was too cautious, Santo said, but the literature on this was sparse; they had to rely on a figure published in a single scientific paper decades ago. Banks began lending again, based on the RICS protocol, but at a stroke, the seven-metre guideline affected millions of homes. And the essential problem of how to tackle knotweed remained. At his desk at RICS, where he consulted, Santo kept fielding calls from valuation experts around the country. "They'd say: 'I've seen knotweed. What do we do about it? How do I advise my client?' And again, nobody knew. Nobody knew what to do."

On the northern hem of Cardiff, by the river Taff, is a five-hectare parcel of land where generations of knotweed have risen and died over a decade. It is the world's largest controlled experiment in dealing with knotweed, and Dan Jones has been tending to it since 2011, when he began a PhD in knotweed management. Jones now runs a consultancy, Advanced Invasives, and he has the patient but morose air of someone who has heard a lot of bad ideas about tackling knotweed. "I've seen people pour boiling water on it, or salting it. I mean, knotweed grows in salt water," he said. "The salt will kill everything for ever, except the knotweed."

The only way to know what precise strategy of attack works best, Jones decided during his PhD, was to conduct trials. So he found this place: a former sports field on the grounds of a

The long read



listed home, where the knotweed had enfeebled the walls of the derelict changing rooms and was closing in on the house itself. The homeowners let Jones turn their land into a giant lab. In photos and videos that Jones shot in 2012, the knotweed is chest-high and impenetrable. It had killed off everything else in its vicinity. As he sank more than 200 fence posts into the soil to mark off square test plots, the only other living thing he encountered was a lone earthworm.

In these plots, Jones had tracked the varying advantages of 19 different experiments. Mowing the knotweed, with a machine or a brush cutter, made it worse, he found, because it spread nuggets of diced-up rhizome all over the field, where they took hold and grew anew. He experimented with a range of herbicides. When glyphosate showed the most promise, he tried injecting it into the knotweed's stalk, spraying it on the leaves, and pouring it down the throats of sawed-off stems.

Jones published his best regimen in a 2018 paper: a dose of glyphosate every autumn, either sprayed on the knotweed or injected into its stem, repeated for anywhere up to seven years. The paper became knotweed canon. "It's fantastic, what he's doing. It's just brilliant," Santo told me about Jones's work. "Suddenly we've got a way to treat it - how to not necessarily eradicate it, but manage it."

Above ground, the effects were dramatic. The leaves withered and dropped off. The stems turned brown and brittle. But in the mud, the rhizome never died. It merely went dormant, ready to grow again if it was ever cut up or propagated. Total eradication, Jones realised, was a pipe dream. At his site, some of his test plots hold just stray stands of dead knotweed canes, and alders and willows have flourished. The lawn behind the house - once held hostage by knotweed - is neat and grassy. But when I admired it, Jones said, in the manner of a man never willing to let his guard down: "A woman brought her dogs here, and the dogs sniffed it out underground. It's all still there."

Other, more expensive options exist. John Butcher, a surveyor with Japanese Knotweed Ltd, a firm specialising in the control of invasive weeds, sometimes tells his clients about encapsulation. The knotweed is cut down, and its roots and soil dug out, but since even this will not finish off the plant's will to live, it is sealed into a membrane of fabric and copper foil, soil and all, and the package is then reburied on site. "The copper prevents the rhizome from breaking out," Butcher said, like a warden of his jailbird.

> **'Touring these infested sites, I caught the odd feeling that I had come to the future world from which humans had departed'**

Every so often, someone thinks up a technique that is more fanciful: a £3,000 thermoelectric device, like a cattle prod, that promises to boil the rhizome, for instance, or dousing a garden in diesel, or setting goats loose to graze on the knotweed. Experts like Jones tend to regard these solutions with raised eyebrows. At their worst, they don't work; at their best, they're impractical, given the sheer scale of knotweed infestation across Britain. Jones trusts in glyphosate.

The success of such investigations, by Jones, Bowes and others, has calmed the consternation of the early 2010s. Last year, as part of a more nuanced protocol, RICS revised its seven-metre guidance to three metres. Knotweed is still an intransigent entity, but we can control it better. At the same time, it has become the focus of so much commerce - of valuations, protocols, damages and bank scrutiny - that its identity as a natural being, as a plant rather than a pestilence, can slide out of sight. When Jones was growing up in Cardiff, he'd come across knotweed next to a rugby ground. "We used to make bases in the knotweed - like little caves that you could hide out in," he said. "It grows so quickly that, in the summer holidays, you can make really good bases." It was the only moment, out of all our conversations, when he sounded anything other than adversarial towards the plant. Once, I asked him if he found knotweed in bloom, with its sprays of cream-white flowers, beautiful in any way. Jones grimaced. He couldn't see it at all.

The site of a knotweed infestation in Sheffield

ALAMY

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Samanth Subramanian *is a regular contributor to the long read*



In Japan, knotweed has an altogether more poetic name: *itadori*. One translation of the word is "tiger cane", perhaps referring to the way a stand of tall dead canes resembles a tiger's striped back. Its native ecosystem imposes more limits on knotweed. Silvergrass and bamboo vie strongly with it for water and soil nutrients. A species of psyllid, an insect not much bigger than the head of a nail, feeds exclusively on knotweed sap, weakening and killing the plant. Even so, itadori grows luxuriantly, ever ready to annex neglected land. When the photographer Koichi Watanabe was a boy, living outside Osaka, he passed a deep wood of black locust trees along the river on his way to school. One year, the trees were all cut down. The next spring, the riverbank swarmed with a plant Watanabe didn't recognise, its buds like asparagus tips and its leaves shaped like hearts. Itadori, rife as life.

For 20 years, Watanabe has been roving the world, photographing knotweed. He calls his project Moving Plants; it fascinates him that plants, so easy to regard as rooted and stable, traverse geographies simply by getting entangled in the lives of humans. His earliest photos were taken in the vicinity of Osaka, and across the island of Hokkaido. By and large, the inhabitants of these areas, and indeed of the rest of Japan, regard itadori with indifference, Watanabe said. The plant's ornamental value is very slight; he has only ever seen it in a flower shop once, in Kyoto. Some supermarkets stock itadori leaf tea, itadori jam and itadori pickles - products that derive an unexpected utility out of knotweed. For Japan's civic authorities, although maybe not for its public at large, knotweed is certainly a pest, if only one of several. Routinely, it has to be cleared from riverbanks and farms, Watanabe told me. "We do think it's a weed. It's just that we don't want to kill it everywhere," he said. "When I heard the words 'eradicate' or 'kill' in England, I was shocked."

One possible reason for this forbearance is that knotweed rarely invades the gardens of Japanese homes. Daisuke Kurose, a plant pathologist who mapped knotweed across southern and northern Japan, said he'd never seen knotweed in private properties, even in the countryside. "As a result, people usually don't care too much about it," Kurose, who now works in Surrey for the agricultural non-profit Cabi, told me. When he came to Cabi, Kurose said, he always felt a twinge of regret that the word "Japanese" was appended to the weed that made people's lives so hard. "But at the same time, I felt bad for British people, too, because I know knotweed is strong and difficult to eradicate."

Watanabe has followed the trail of knotweed to the UK, Poland, the Netherlands and both coasts of the US. One of his photos shows a geyser of knotweed erupting out of other foliage in Leiden. In Poland, Watanabe said, he found the worst cases of blight he'd seen in any country, the plant sometimes invading wheat fields or choking irrigation canals. The most extreme of Watanabe's photos give the impression of some colossal digestive action frozen mid-process. In one eerie photo, shot in upstate New York, knotweed has engulfed the base of a house, pouring in through one side and out the other. Only the house's upper floor is visible; left untended, it too will vanish into the innards of the knotweed stand.

Touring these sites, Watanabe wrote in 2015: "I caught the odd feeling that I had come to the future world from which human beings had departed. Vegetation would be renewed year after year if people were gone and constructions were demolished. Hybridised itadori would be the main creature in this area." But these didn't feel, to him, like outtakes of a vegetal apocalypse. Instead, Watanabe developed a silent communion with his subject, admiring the way its leaves shook in the breeze, and eventually learning to sympathise with it. Too often, he told me, people speak about knotweed as if it were a virus: "It appears in the metaphor of 'itadori infestation' or 'itadori as pest'." The truth is, he said, that humans are responsible - for setting knotweed loose across the planet, and then for losing their minds about its presence. "The itadori is not guilty," Watanabe said. "It is just living." ●

Letters

Established 1906

Country diary

Castro Verde, Portugal

Just off the main square in this southern Alentejo town is a post office of semicircular shape. It's an attractive structure somewhat resembling a tiered wedding cake, and at the point where its curved front meets the first flat, tiled roof is a series of protruding brick supports. Into the 10 alcoves framed by these and spanning no more than six metres of the whole facade, house martins have inserted roughly 200 of their little mud-brick houses.

Scores of the chattering labourers fly in and out of their works to present to any passing observer a glorious, ever-changing weave of blue-and-white flight lines. We were far from the only people to stop and admire this beautiful, kinetic sculpture, yet it's also the most densely packed subcolony of this species I've seen in my life.

In the whole town there must be many hundreds, if not thousands, of both swallows and martins breeding. A nearby water tower supports a further 50 nests. A tiny arched entrance to Castro Verde's market ground had 11 nests clustered round a single light fitting. This alone is possibly more pairs than breed now in my Derbyshire hometown of Buxton. Given the catastrophic loss of house martins across all Britain (about half have disappeared since 1970), Castro Verde serves as a powerful reminder of what we've lost, but it may also illustrate one reason why we've lost them. Not everyone can put up with the mud nests above and the ha'p'orth of mess below, and people routinely discourage them.

Before getting dewy-eyed about a contrasting deep tolerance shown by the Portuguese for these fabulous birds, I should add that around the town square, many buildings had fine metal spikes protruding at the point where house martins customarily build. I suspect, however, that the birds have found a way around this by adding more mud cells on top of a first layer of nests, sometimes two or three deep, the spikes therefore having no impact. For now, both birds and people are getting along just fine and, surely, to their mutual benefit.

Mark Cocker

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True equality is an idea the Tories just don't get

Justine Greening's oft-proposed bromide to solve problems of public finances, growth and productivity through the removal of inequality of opportunity is no more than a soft-soap UK variant of the American dream (What's the big idea that could win the Conservatives the next election? Social mobility, theguardian.com, 12 May). In the US, so the argument goes, if you work hard you will make it. The corollary of course is that if (and probably when) you don't make it, you didn't work hard enough – it was your fault.

Without addressing the underlying structural problems of inequality – in health, housing, transport and education – any Tory panacea of equality of opportunity is simply a device to get a few strivers to the top of the pile, while leaving the structural inequalities still in place. If you make it, that's great, and if you don't, well you can't complain as you had an equal chance to succeed.

It is fantasy to suppose that social mobility will deal with the UK's chronic economic and social problems. Levelling up is a conveniently vague phrase and perhaps some "red wall" voters thought it meant social mobility. Many more, I suspect, thought it meant fixing glaring failures in public provision. Most voters care little about the opportunity to be CEO of, say, a water or train company and make a pile of money. The things they care far more about include clean rivers and an efficient public transport system – along with all the other enablers and benefits that a thriving G7 economy must provide, such as healthcare and affordable housing.

Perhaps the real problem for the current generation of Conservatives is that they are unable to see the role that the state can play in driving the economy through capital investment and a sustained industrial strategy. They want to be in office, but they don't want to govern; small-state thinkers in a big-state universe.

As the UK continues to lose pace with the rest of the G7 and the Brexit promises become more visibly hollow, let us hope that a better alternative comes sooner rather than later.

Henry Thompson
Harrogate, North Yorkshire

● Justine Greening is right to recognise a fundamental lack of equality of opportunity in the UK. But for a party ideologically opposed to public services and ideologically committed to enriching a small percentage of the population at the expense of the rest, inequality is struck through it like a stick of Blackpool rock. The Conservative party would love the next general election to be fought on vision and ideas rather than on record, but Greening fails to acknowledge that delivery of equality of opportunity would by its very nature require a superordinate change in the culture of the party.

Philip Smith
Bradford-on-Avon, Wiltshire

● Justine Greening's cause is important, but anyone who believes the 2019 election was about social mobility is deluded. It was entirely about Brexit and "getting it done". Levelling up is a valid cause and should receive both focus and funding, but it is not what the next election will be about. The next election will be about the cost of living and the NHS – two things where the party's record is left wanting. The election after next, levelling up may get some traction. For the forthcoming election, the focus should be on undoing the dreadful harm of the previous Tory governments.

Ben Kenyon
London

We're witnessing the end of our right to protest

These are worrying times (The police can do whatever they want to protesters now, 13 May). When I policed protest, across 30 years of service (1986-2016), in a variety of roles that included holding a riot shield myself, the police were simply there to protect life and property. We were the visible safety barrier between the protesters and those they were protesting against. We allowed them both to be heard.

Paul Phillips
Retired chief superintendent

● Andy Beckett (Is there a future for protest in Britain? Standing in the muted republican crowd, my fears only grew, theguardian.com, 11 May) mentions the past suppression of protest by the practice of "kettling" – corralling protesters in a confined space for hours. As a human rights solicitor in 2005, I challenged this practice by means of a judicial review. I instructed Keir Starmer QC (as he then was) to appear for our clients. We lost the case. The judge who decided the case was Mr Justice Tugendhat, father of the MP Tom Tugendhat, who is now security minister.

In 2012, the European court of human rights upheld his decision. There is a long history of suppression of protest in this country.

Louise Christian
London

● Civicus.org, an organisation that monitors liberties and freedom across the globe, recently downgraded the UK from "narrowed" to "obstructed", as our freedoms become increasingly diminished. This puts us on a par with Poland and Hungary. The passive acceptance of the ongoing threat to our freedoms by too many of the population is a desperate indictment of our situation.

John Barnett
Stewkley, Buckinghamshire

● In 1957, when as an 11-year-old I arrived with my parents in this country to find safe haven as refugees from Soviet-occupied Hungary, the sight of a friendly bobby on street corners taught me to not be afraid of authority. Today, at the age of 78, having never knowingly committed a single law infringement in my life, I nevertheless have to fear being arrested if I as much as take part in a peaceful demonstration. My parents would turn in their graves.

Elizabeth Morley
Aberystwyth, Ceredigion

How nature's larder is depleted by foraging

Every time we forage, we damage the habitat and food supply for wildlife that is already under pressure from humans and climate change (Taken from the wild: foragers are harvesting too much food from nature, experts warn, 13 May).

I live on the edge of parkland in Bristol. This is a great resource for people and wildlife, particularly since more of the space has been allowed to rewild. However, it is a finite resource.

For local wildlife – foxes, badgers, birds and insects – the park is their home and their larder. Each time I pick a blackberry, which I confess to doing, I'm depleting this larder. My wife and I have witnessed the wholesale clearing of sloes, damsons, wild garlic and elderflowers.

If foraging can help control Japanese knotweed, that's welcome, but otherwise we should be more thoughtful about the impact of our plundering.

As for commercial-scale foraging, I'm put in mind of commercial whaling and the wild fur trade. Look where those activities took us.

Neil Blessitt
Bristol

Corrections and clarifications

● An article referred to the Russian oil and gas company Tatneft as "sanctioned". To clarify, it is Tatneft's former subsidiary, now named Tatshina LLC, which is under sanctions from the EU for its role in providing the Russian army with tyres (Kudermetova to remove Russia logo for Wimbledon, 2 May, p36, later editions).

Editorial complaints and corrections can be sent to guardian.readers@theguardian.com or The readers' editor, **Kings Place, 90 York Way, London N1 9GU.** You can also leave a voicemail on **020 3353 4736**

Feeling lonely? Try a university challenge

Re loneliness (Editorial, 9 May), I would recommend U3A (University of the Third Age) to anyone no longer in work, whether they were lonely or not. I moved to a new area knowing no one locally. I was made welcome and quickly made friends. There are 1,035 branches of U3A across the UK and the average cost of membership is £20 a year. It provides a wide range of activities and opportunities to meet up for company and fun.

Janet Hawkins
Uttoxeter, Staffordshire

● In response to Gaby Hinsliff's piece on generations sharing a home (Journal, 12 May), we shared a fairly modest terraced house with four generations of family. The experience was warm, respectful, mutually enlightening and unforgettable. The generations benefit deeply from close association with each other.

Dr Ian Flintoff
Oxford

● With regard to your article on sleep (Journal, 10 May), realising that I needed a nap when driving one day, I found a car park and began to snooze. As I drifted off, I heard shouting, "She's passed out", and then banging on the window. Having a nap in the car isn't as easy as one may think.

Jenny Moir (nee Clements)
Chelmsford

● Years ago, my parents took on a rescue dog called Romeo (Letters, 13 May). There was many a time "Wherefore art thou" was muttered back to them when calling to him in the local park.

Laura Hall
Horsham, West Sussex

● I was surprised by Justin Welby's speeding fine (Report, 13 May). I wonder if he had appealed to the highest authority, he might have been let off.

Helen Crawley
Wells, Somerset



Lord Brooke of Sutton Mandeville

Conservative Northern Ireland secretary with a key role in initiating peace talks

Brooke was an old-style Tory - emollient, cultivated and charming, with a passion for cricket
PETER MACDIARMID/GETTY IMAGES

The former Conservative cabinet minister Peter Brooke, who has died aged 89, ought to be remembered as the Northern Ireland secretary who inaugurated the province's delicate peace process, or even as the founding minister for the National Lottery. But he will probably be recalled for briefly singing a song on an Irish TV chat show the night when seven Protestant construction workers were killed by an IRA bomb.

The singing of My Darling Clementine in Dublin on Gay Byrne's Late Late Show shortly after the atrocity, in January 1992, was a mistake for which Brooke apologised and offered his resignation, but he had an understandable excuse. Brooke had had a hard week working in Belfast and had barely heard about the attack in County Tyrone. However, he was chiefly disconcerted by being asked unexpectedly about the traumatic death of his first wife, with his new wife sitting in the studio audience - and was then cajoled by Byrne into singing the only song he knew. "My defences were down … it was patently an error," he said later.

It was a measure of Brooke's popularity in the Commons that when he apologised unreservedly in the chamber the following week he received cross-party support, with only Ian Paisley's hardline Democratic Unionists demanding his resignation. The prime minister, John Major, supported Brooke at the time, but dropped him a few months later after unexpectedly winning the April 1992 general election. He was brought back into the cabinet as culture secretary that September following the resignation of David Mellor.

Brooke was well liked in the house because he was an old-style Tory, not one of the highly partisan Thatcherite ministers who surrounded him in government. He was emollient, cultivated and charming, with a passion for cricket - and a penchant for using it as a metaphor. Before entering parliament he had been a successful management consultant.

Brooke was born in London into a political family: his father, Henry, was a hardline home secretary in the last days of the Macmillan and Home administrations, who was responsible in the Profumo affair for the prosecution of Stephen Ward. His mother, Barbara (nee Matthews), was a London councillor and had been a vice-chair of the Conservative party for 10 years. Both parents were given life peerages and sat together in the Lords, as Lord Brooke of Cumnor and Lady Brooke of Ystradfellte.

The oldest of four children, Peter followed in his father's footsteps by being educated at Marlborough and Balliol College, Oxford, where he studied classics and became president of the Oxford Union debating society and president of the university Christian Association. After graduating in 1957 he studied for an MBA at Harvard and Lausanne, and joined a management consultancy, working for periods in the 1970s in Brussels, Switzerland and New York.

If it was always likely that he would eventually enter politics, he did not do so without difficulty. He applied for nomination in 27 constituencies and stood unsuccessfully in the Labour seat of Bedwellty against Neil Kinnock in the October 1974 election, where he came in nearly 23,000 votes behind and lost his deposit. It was not until 1977, when he was 42, that he was nominated for the safe Tory seat of the City of London and Westminster. He won the byelection there that followed the resignation of Christopher Tugendhat, who was becoming a European commissioner. Brooke held the seat until his retirement from the Commons in 2001.

Of his infamous appearance on the Gay Byrne show he said: 'My defences were down … it was patently an error'

He became a junior government whip following the 1979 election and served time as a junior minister in the Department of Education (1983-85) and then the Treasury (1985-87), where he was put in charge of Customs and Excise. It was a surprise when Margaret Thatcher made him party chair after the 1987 election.

Despite the Tories' victory, the campaign had been marked by bitter rows over its conduct between Norman Tebbit and Lord (David) Young of Graffham, and staff morale was low. The promotion of an obscure junior minister - Brooke was also made paymaster-general, a post his father had once held - rather than a more senior party figure seemed a strange one in the circumstances, but Brooke's easy manner and business acumen helped to steady the organisation.

As a pro-European he was unhappy with the increasingly Eurosceptic party's campaign against "A Diet of Brussels" on its posters during the 1989 European elections, though he was not influential enough to change it.

Soon moved after the elections he became Northern Ireland secretary - a promotion also greeted with scepticism on both sides of the Irish Sea. Unionists discounted the fact that Brooke came from an old Anglo-Irish family - he claimed to be three-eighths Irish - and grew alarmed when he soon suggested in an interview that Sinn Féin might be included in future negotiations if the Provisional IRA declared a ceasefire. He would later, out of office, speak in a BBC interview of Gerry Adams being a brave man to have entered negotiations.

In deep secrecy, in 1990 "deniable" talks got under way between an MI5 agent and Republican paramilitaries. Much more publicly but slowly, Brooke headed moves to bring constitutional parties and the Irish Republic's government towards negotiations: "talks about talks", the so-called Brooke initiative.

The Economist magazine remarked: "Mr Brooke has done more in a few months than many of his predecessors managed in several years and nobody expected it of him." The IRA's campaign nevertheless continued, as did that of the Loyalists who, with the connivance of the police, shot the Republican lawyer Pat Finucane in front of his family in 1989.

After the Late Late show debacle, it was always likely that Brooke would be moved, though Major's excuse that a younger man needed promotion was undermined by the fact that he was succeeded at the

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Northern Ireland Office by Patrick Mayhew, who was four years older.

Brooke was disappointed but within six months he was back as culture secretary following Mellor's affair with the model Antonia de Sancha. Since what started life as the Department of National Heritage had been created for Mellor, Brooke's appointment to replace him was again a surprise, though in fact he had wide cultural interests, in pictures and books, was a regular theatregoer, spoke several languages and was a keen visitor of ancient churches.

The department – in which he had to deal with numerous arts organisations seeking government funding – had its pitfalls. There was the fire at Windsor Castle, culminating the Queen's "annus horribilis" in December 1992, after which he and the prime minister promised government funding for the repairs before being forced to backtrack in the face of public opposition.

Another lapse of judgment occurred with the announcement that the 50th anniversary of the end of the second world war would be celebrated by a family fun day in Green Park (though this was the wheeze of a junior minister) from which Brooke also had to retreat following criticism from veterans. However, he was successful in protecting the BBC licence fee from perennial demands that it should be replaced by a subscription service.

In 1994, Brooke was again replaced and returned to the backbenches. He rather hoped to become the Commons speaker but this was thwarted by the election of Betty Boothroyd. He accepted her appointment with good grace and remained in the Commons for another seven years before stepping down and becoming a life peer. He also served in the Lords as chair of the Association of Conservative Peers.

Brooke's list of outside interests accumulated: he became a trustee of the Wordsworth Trust, supervising Dove Cottage, of the Churches Conservation Trust and of the Cusichaca project which seeks to preserve the Inca remains in Peru – his first wife had grown up there – and of various other arts projects, some in Wiltshire, where he had his home. In 1992 he was appointed Companion of Honour.

Brooke married Joan Smith in 1964, and they had four sons, one of whom died in infancy. She died suddenly in 1985 after a routine hospital operation went wrong. In 1991, he married Lindsay Allinson, who was a Conservative Party election agent. She survives him, along with his sons, Jonathan, Daniel and Sebastian; sisters Honor and Margaret; seven grandchildren; and one great-grandchild.
Stephen Bates

Peter Leonard Brooke, Lord Brooke of Sutton Mandeville, born 3 March 1934; died 13 May 2023

Jeremy Gordin

Journalist who fought for the proper application of criminal law in his native South Africa

The South African journalist Jeremy Gordin campaigned to release innocent prisoners wrongly convicted in flawed trials. In 2008 he co-founded and became the first director of the University of the Witwatersrand Justice Project. Given his concern for the proper application of criminal law, it is a cruel coincidence that his death, aged 70, came through a break-in at his home in Johannesburg.

The Justice Project was an initiative of the university's journalism department, in which students investigated dubious convictions, torture and abuse of prisoners, and overcrowding in detention facilities. Their findings helped to highlight previously unreported cases and resulted in many releases of men sent to jail for mistaken reasons.

They focused on controversial doctrines such as "common purpose". South African law holds that if several persons form a common intention to prosecute any unlawful purpose, each of them is party to every offence committed by any one of them.

The Justice Project also drew attention to the catch-22 involved in parole decisions under which release was only granted if prisoners showed remorse. This meant that prisoners who insisted that they had not committed the offences for which they were convicted were forced to lie or else forgo the chance of parole.

In one successful case pursued by Gordin and the student journalists he was mentoring, the project won freedom in 2011 for Fusi Mofokeng and Tshkolo Mokoena, two men who had been arrested in 1992, towards the end of apartheid, for killing a policeman, on the basis of false statements. The actual killers went to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 1998 and were granted amnesty while Mofokeng and Mokoena spent 19 years in jail.

Gordin's interest in using journalism to undo miscarriages of justice flowed from a long career in South African newspapers, in which he edited the leading financial title Business Report as well as the Sunday Independent, and from 2012 until 2015 was publisher of the Daily Sun, South Africa's largest daily paper.

Born in Pretoria, Jeremy was the son of Micky (Mary) Awerbuch, a teacher, and Elias Gordin, a pharmacist. They were descended from Lithuanian and Latvian Jews who emigrated to South Africa from tsarist Russia. Gordin attended local schools in Pretoria except for a four-year break from 1960 in Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City), Vietnam, where his father worked for the World Health Organization.

He completed his secondary education at Damelin college in Johannesburg before enrolling at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 1971 for a course in English and philosophy. When the university closed temporarily because of the Yom Kippur war, Gordin went to Sweden for two years.

He returned to South Africa in 1977 to start a wide-ranging career in journalism, which included editorships of tabloids as well as serious broadsheets. His first job was with the Rand Daily Mail. Between 1981 and 1983 he was business editor of the weekly magazine Financial Mail.

Appointed managing editor of South Africa's leading bookshop, Exclusive Books, he led its expansion to the country's major cities. He was headhunted to edit Playboy's first venture into South Africa, a shock for the country's straitlaced pro-apartheid regime, but which Gordin celebrated by posing nude in the Johannesburg Sunday Times, with a copy of Playboy strategically placed. In another zigzag, a few months later he moved to edit Business Report.

From 2006 until 2012 he edited the Sunday Independent before taking charge at the Daily Sun, an investigative tabloid that developed a largely African readership. In one scoop, which was widely picked up by the foreign media, the paper published video images of a Mozambican immigrant being tied to the back of a police van in a small town near Johannesburg and dragged to his death after parking on the wrong side of the road.

Gordin found time to publish three books of poems and three award-winning biographies. A Long Night's Damage: Working for the Apartheid State (1998) was a collaboration with Eugene de Kock, one of apartheid's most notorious killers, which showed that De Kock was not an out-of-control police commander with sadistic tendencies as most media reports suggested. He was taking orders from top politicians to murder African National Congress activists.

In 2008 Gordin wrote a biography of Jacob Zuma on the eve of his becoming the country's president. Some reviewers accused Gordin of being a Zuma apologist. He had easy access to the ANC leader for interviews and conceded that he was "sympathetic to Zuma and therefore to some extent malleable", but felt it was important to explain the future president's attitudes.

However, during Zuma's two terms as president and the five years in power of his successor, Cyril Ramaphosa, Gordin became a severe critic of corruption within the ANC, to the point that in a recent column, written in the form of a letter, he advised his adult children to follow the Jewish diaspora model: "When things are clearly falling apart and the general moronicism, greed and lack of care grow very annoying … you, who have your whole lives before you, seriously need to consider going to live elsewhere. We've been doing it for centuries, after all."

For the last seven years, Gordin put the wisdom he had acquired through decades of living in what he called Seffrica into a popular weekly column for Politicsweb.

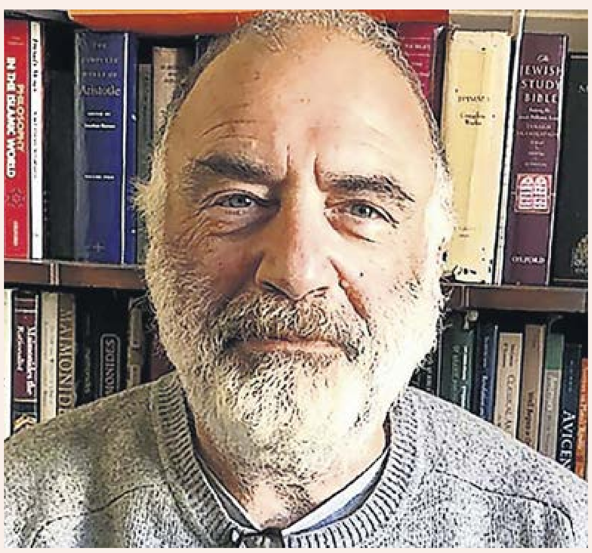
It was a unique combination of quotations from literary sources, short phrases in Yiddish or Afrikaans, jokes about pedantic rabbis, references to philosophy, reminiscences of chaotic teenage and student years, and memories of his parents and grandparents. But inside this weekly ragbag of witty allusions and irrelevancies readers would always find a hard core of seriousness and principle about a key issue of the day.

While house burglaries and street muggings have plagued South Africa for decades, it is rare for high-profile personalities to fall victim to apparently random murder; Gordin's death brought many tributes from colleagues, who admired his versatility and openness to new ideas as well as his enthusiasm for mentoring young reporters.

In 1993 Gordin married Deborah Blake, then working for a book distribution company and now a journalist on the newspaper the Sowetan. She survives him, along with their children, Jake and Nina.
Jonathan Steele

Jeremy Gordin, journalist, born 6 September 1952; died 31 March 2023

"You, who have your whole lives before you, seriously need to consider going to live elsewhere



Grodin became a severe critic of corruption within the ANC

Birthdays

Lady (Kay) Andrews, former chair, English Heritage, 80; **Pierce Brosnan**, actor, 70; **Nicky Chinn**, songwriter, 78; **Phil Clarke**, rugby league player and commentator, 52; **Billy Cobham**, drummer and composer, 79; **Andrzej Duda**, president of Poland, 51; **Judy Finnigan**, broadcaster; and writer, 75; **Robert Fripp**, guitarist and producer, 77; **Mary Anne Hobbs**, DJ and journalist, 59; **Olga Korbut**, former Olympic gymnast, 68; **Christian Lacroix**, fashion designer, 72; **Lord (David) Blencathra**, former Conservative MP and minister, 70; **Lord (Kenneth) Morgan**, historian, 89; **Hazel O'Connor**, singer and songwriter, 68; **Jonathan Richman**, musician, 72; **Prof Emma Rothschild**, economist and historian, 75; **Gabriela Sabatini**, tennis player, 53; **Janet Soskice**, professor of philosophical theology, Cambridge University, 72; **Tori Spelling**, actor, 50; **Debra Winger**, actor, 68.

Reread our obituaries of Harry Belafonte and Dame Mary Quant
theguardian.com/obituaries

Puzzles

Yesterday's solutions

Killer sudoku
Easy

1	8	5	6	9	7	4	3	2
9	6	2	5	4	3	1	8	7
4	3	7	8	2	1	9	5	6
8	9	4	2	7	5	3	6	1
6	2	1	9	3	8	7	4	5
5	7	3	4	1	6	8	2	9
2	1	6	3	8	9	5	7	4
3	4	9	7	5	2	6	1	8
7	5	8	1	6	4	2	9	3

Medium

7	1	6	9	3	2	8	4	5
3	9	8	4	5	6	2	1	7
4	5	2	1	8	7	6	3	9
1	6	9	7	2	4	3	5	8
5	7	4	3	1	8	9	2	6
8	2	3	5	6	9	4	7	1
2	4	7	6	9	5	1	8	3
9	3	5	8	4	1	7	6	2
6	8	1	2	7	3	5	9	4

Codeword

O	X	B	O	W		A	R	M	B	A	N	D
B		I		O		N		U		I		E
J	O	G	T	R	O	T		R	E	M	I	X
E				K		I		M				T
C	I	T	R	I	C		Q	U	A	S	A	R
T		O		N		S		R		Q		O
	S	P	I	G	O	T	S		J	U	G	S
C		M				O				I		E
A	V	O	W		S	P	E	C	T	R	E	
R		S		S		S		E		M		M
O	U	T	R	A	N		E	N	Z	Y	M	E
U				F		P		T				S
S	A	L	S	A		A	Z	I	M	U	T	H
A		E		R		N		L		S		E
L	E	A	V	I	N	G		E	W	E	R	S

Cryptic crossword
Solution No. 29,070

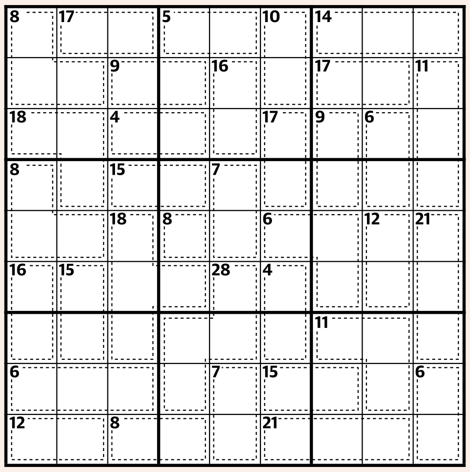
		P	E	T	S	H	O	P	B	O	Y	S		
D		U		H		I		O		N		T		S
O	N	T	H	E	U	P		S	E	L	F	I	S	H
G		O		T		S		H		Y		C		A
G	U	N	B	A	T	T	L	E		J	O	K	E	R
E		E				E		S		U		T		K
D	A	S	H		P	R	O	T	E	S	T	O	R	S
		F		C						T		T		
C	H	O	C	O	H	O	L	I	C		A	H	A	B
H		O		M		O		N				E		O
A	C	T	U	P		H	U	S	H	P	U	P	P	Y
V		I		I		L		I		R		O		I
V	A	N	I	L	L	A		D	R	O	P	I	N	S
Y		I		E		L		E		O		N		H
		T	U	R	N	A	P	R	O	F	I	T		

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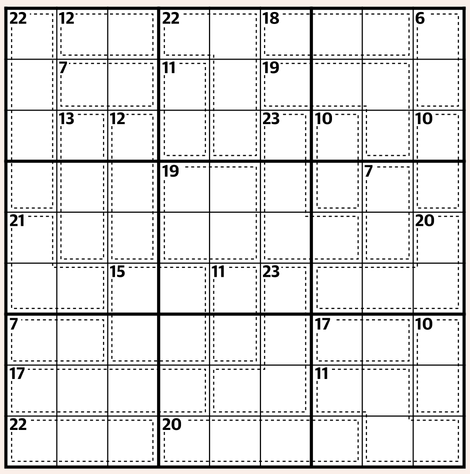
Killer sudoku

Easy

The normal rules of sudoku apply: fill each row, column and 3x3 box with all the numbers from 1 to 9. In addition, the digits in each inner shape (marked by dots) must add up to the number in the top corner of that box. No digit can be repeated within an inner shape.



Medium



Codeword

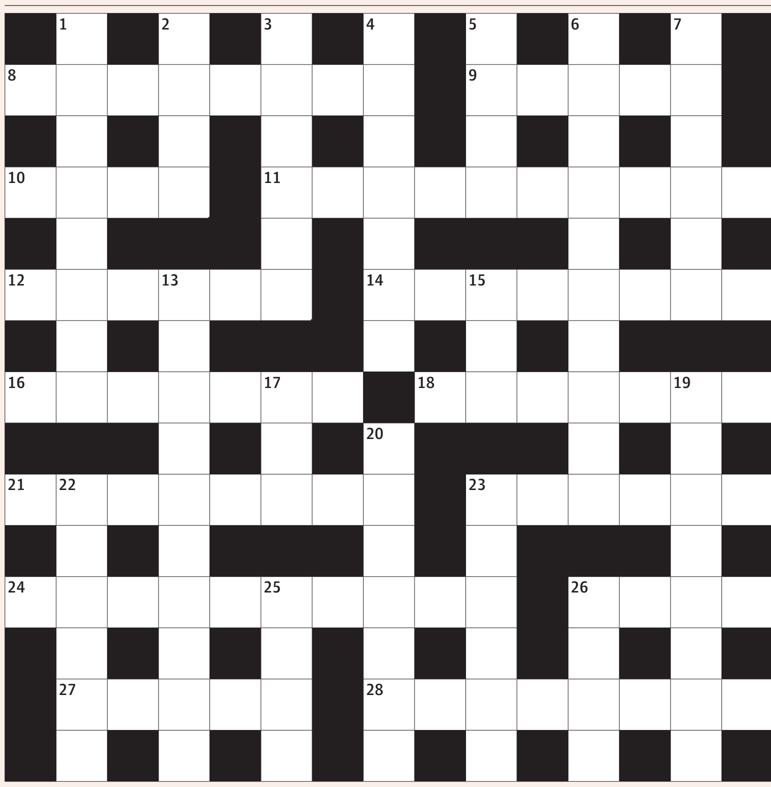
Each letter of the alphabet makes at least one appearance in the grid, and is represented by the same number wherever it appears. The letters decoded should help you to identify other letters and words in the grid.

11		18		5		2		11		2		4
5	23	25	10	2		10 O	23	25	7	5	24	8
1		12		10		10		15		9		21
18	3	13	22	20	13	7		8	3	21	13	3
5		10				25				13		7
15	21	24	12	14	21	15		16	25	8	8	1
20				21		1		10		8		
4	5	14	13	4	8		9	21	13	13	24	4
		3		4		5		24				25
4	13	13	7 D	1		16	13	7	3	10	10	2
1		13				5				26		26
15	5	6	13	4		8	3	5	17	5	25	15
26		13		25		25		15		9		25
19	10	3	25	6	10	24		16	15	21	14	14
4		4		13		12		4		13		1

A B C ~~D~~ E F G H I J K L M N ~~O~~ P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

1	2	3	4	5	6	7 D	8	9	10 O	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

Guardian cryptic crossword No 29,071 set by Brummie



Across

8 Fish the deep bay? (8)
9 Stop measure by lawyers (5)
10 See 5
11 Unity's lost diary in tatters outside institute (10)
12 Old compact Danish city (6)
14 Material about eastern Mediterranean area (8)
16 Famous silent film character left before last of the crush (7)
18 Labour on retrospective cover-up (7)
21 Beautify, being fairly excited (6,2)
23 Intertwine branches of fruit around line (6)
24 One who endures sees signs of ageing (5,5)
26 Little dear for an essayist? (4)
27 Take by force? Nice! (5)
28 Water runs through this county estate with ultimately little resistance (8)

Down

1 One who progresses the motion of drones circling London's financial centre (8)
2 Don't embrace husband when star's around (4)
3 Swears to move main residents (6)
4 Disapprove of Democrat research to do away with vote (7)
5,10 Censored dodgy assets for the generation of future profit (4,4)
6 Precis of two books about dissecting fly (10)
7 Surrealist Brontë novel (6)
13 Variation on a Haydn theme: Hearts Neglected to Set a Match Date (4,3,3)
15 See 17
17,15 Top song base (3,3)
19 Eastern US state linked to brown hamper (8)
20 Mark's parcel accepted by school (7)
22 Forced into bankruptcy, one breaks under review (6)
23 Cheapest leather covers grinding tool (6)
25 Was an MP with ecstasy supply too much? (4)
26 Cat joints can be heard (4)

The Guardian

G2



“It’s all about getting rid of the Tories

Ed Davey
on love, loss and the Lib Dems

Tuesday 16/05/23

Life & Arts

Black lives
Jennifer Hosten – from Miss World to diplomat
page 4



‘A creative marvel!’
The Legend of Zelda reaches new heights
page 8

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Zoe Williams



Remember the crash? We're still shopping while Rome burns

It was the first beautiful day of 2023 and everyone in the country was in a park, except for me. I was in Westfield's west London outpost, in Shepherd's Bush. I'm not allowed to write about the kids any more – I've had article eight of the Human Rights Act thrown at me – so let's just say that two children belonging to someone else made me take them shopping.

I hadn't set foot in the place since 30 October 2008, when I covered its opening, which was newsworthy because it was the largest covered shopping centre in the UK. Boris Johnson had recently been elected as mayor of London; the country was yet to clock how tragic the consequences of that would be. He was at the opening, but I missed him because I ran into my school friend's mum.

Everything has changed, everything has remained the same. Well, there are a load of Korean wares now – bubble tea, makeup – which is why this stranger's children forced me there in the first place, but the M&S is still standing. John Lewis is there now, but these days is happy to be knowingly undersold, having dropped its 97-year-old slogan last year, although you wouldn't notice to look around. You would just think: "Is the market for slacks and Le Creuset pepper grinders still that hot?"

Oh, there has been one other change, just a small thing, really: all our underpinning assumptions about capitalism. We don't even call it that any more, we call it "late capitalism", a phrase I used to like, because it made it sound like it was nearly over, but now hate, because it makes it sound exploitative and discourteous.

When this place opened, it had a strong tang of metaphor: it was so shiny yet so windowless, so vast yet so repetitive, that you felt blessed to be allowed in and also completely disoriented, separated from any sense of place, unconscious of time. Have I been here an hour or a day? Is Johnson still around? Would a proper newshound try to find him or was that so long ago that he is in the Cotswolds now? How far have I walked, to get from that shoe shop to this very similar one? Am I hungry or just empty?

> When Lehman collapsed, it felt like the brink of a new era

Headlines called it things like a "temple of consumerism". Lehman Brothers had collapsed only a few weeks before and it felt like the brink of a new era. Bankers would be put in prison, surely; we would realise that financialisation was destroying prosperity; 30 years of free market fundamentalism would have to give way to a leftwing agenda of redistribution and equality, which someone must have ready to go. We have been to enough meetings.

What a weird time to open a temple of consumerism – at the very moment when materialism was about to topple off its plinth, like that statue of Saddam Hussein. And yet, what a perfect time to open a place full of stuff you don't need that baffles the senses. We had been living in a cheap-debt dream and we were about to wake up.

If you had told me then that the financial crash would be paid for entirely by regular people – who didn't even know what a collateralised debt obligation was until five minutes before, yet saw their incomes stagnate and their public services decline for years, with the result that, 15 years hence, the whole OECD is living in a necropolitical nightmare, the violent fantasies of government rhetoric our only fireworks in a landscape of grinding penury – I would have … well, I don't know what I would have done. But I definitely wouldn't have lost an unknowable number of hours asking my friend's mum how her extended family was doing in Cork. I would have been more worried.

Westfield still has an air of timelessness, with an additional layer of confusion now that there are Bentleys parked on the concourse, so you don't know whether you are indoors or outdoors. It's still a metaphor for something, although I can't yet tell you what. I'll come back to you in 15 years.

Standups will say anything for laughs. Just ask my sister

Two years ago, my sister was about to turn 50 and I asked her spouse what he was getting her. He rattled off some ideas so catastrophically bad that I was unable to find the words for how badly he had erred. He had booked her a number of short courses and got her flute repaired, so she could start playing again, having given up in the late 80s. There are two things that my sister absolutely hates, to the point of phobia: one is slugs and the other is self-improvement. I genuinely thought she might leave him.

It turned out he was right and I was wrong: she is now a member of an orchestra. Running the numbers, he has lived with her almost twice as long as I did (they were teenage sweethearts), so I should have considered that he might know a thing or two. A standup comedy course was even more successful than the flute. She really liked it. She still does it. She is very funny and, more to the point, incredibly agile. All her material is savage about people she knows well, so if, for instance, she sees her Mr in the audience, she has to ditch that set immediately and revert to the one in which she destroys her own children.

So, of course, I go as often as I can, just to see her white-hot panic as she mentally tears up seven minutes entitled "My sister is an arsehole". It's got to the point where I really like open mic: there is something about the generosity of the novice performer, where you can see the fear in their faces and watch them power through it anyway, for no better reason than to make the audience laugh, that flips your brain into a place where everything is funny. Guys in their 30s with overbearing mothers, millennials and their adventures on dating apps, collectors of Star Wars memorabilia, Swedish émigrés with observations on British hygiene – people will tell you anything when it's a choice between that and dying on stage. It's like hacking their mainframe.



COVER: DAVID LEVENE/THE GUARDIAN

Pass notes



№ 4,558

The microwave

Age: 78. It was invented in 1945 after the US radar engineer Percy Spencer realised the device he was standing next to was melting his chocolate bar.
Appearance: Boxy.
Why are we talking about microwaves? Has someone nuked herring in the office again? Are you still harping on about that? No, the microwave is having a moment, Vogue says.
If Vogue says so, it must be true. But why? Is there a Prada x Panasonic collab in the works? Or has Sam Smith turned one into trousers? Not yet. But one Vogue writer has been testing microwave cookery.
Why? It doesn't sound very chic. Microwaves are enjoying a chef-led rehabilitation, spearheaded by the chef and restaurateur David Chang, whose book of microwave-led home cooking features fragrant mussels, umami-rich chawanmushi and even spaghetti cacio e pepe.
Yikes, I bet Italy is thrilled. I believe they've considered withdrawing their ambassador to the US, although Chang prepares only the sauce, not the pasta, in the microwave, so perhaps a diplomatic incident can be avoided.
No shade to Vogue, but hasn't the microwavé been having a moment since Nigella archly mispronounced it? Lawson told us she reheated milk in the mee-cro-war-vay in 2020, a cultural event of immense significance, yes. But way back in 2012, Jamie Oliver was calling it "brilliant technology" and waxing lyrical about its way with potatoes and puddings. What's supercharged the microwavé's rehabilitation is the cost of living crisis.
Tell me more. Microwaving is one of the cheapest, most energy-efficient ways to cook, with some estimates putting the cost of using one at as little as 8p a day.
I suppose that's worth a little brain frying. Don't worry: the rays can't escape from the metal box, so you would have to climb inside and cook yourself to do serious harm. The World Health Organization isn't worried.
Next you'll be telling me they don't cook food from the inside out. "The waves lose energy as they pass through food, so anything more than 2cm or so from the surface won't heat up much," according to New Scientist.
My mind is blown (but not microwaved). You haven't mentioned the microwave's greatest contribution to civilisation. What?
Reheating a forgotten cup of coffee 12 times in one day. Oh, was that yours? Sorry, I chucked it when I was heating my sardine and stilton soup.
Do say: "Ping!"
Don't say: "I'll tell you what's hot for autumn/winter 2023: potatoes."

Black lives

'I never saw myself as just a beauty

Jennifer Hosten made history as the first Black Miss World. But, she tells **Ellen E Jones**, it was only a stop en route to a life as a diplomat



With her family



Hosten at her home near Toronto

Jennifer Hosten was 23 years old when she made history, as the first Black woman to be crowned Miss World. Footage of that evening, on 20 November 1970, was broadcast live from the Royal Albert Hall in London to about 100 million viewers worldwide, and shows Hosten, representing Grenada, looking radiantly beautiful and endearingly stunned, as host Bob Hope places the winner's crown on her head.

Her moment in the spotlight had already been overshadowed, however. Approximately 40 minutes earlier, the proceedings were interrupted when a group of women's liberation activists began sounding football rattles and throwing flour-bombs in protest at what they saw as an egregious display of sexism.

Hosten, backstage, could only hear the demonstrators. "I don't think I was scared," she says, "but the sound made us wonder what was going on. People thought the contest had come to an end." Once order was restored, a visibly shaken Hope returned to the stage and attempted to assign meaning to the melee: "I want to tell you anybody that would try to break up an affair as wonderful as this … with these wonderful girls from the entire world, has got to be on some kind of dope!"

In the half-century since, Miss World 1970 has been touted as an example of the need for "intersectional feminism", before the phrase had even been invented. Was the contest ever really intended as a celebration of international womanhood? Or was it always just an organised excuse for an ogle? Either way, in the eye of the storm, Miss World herself found some clarity: "It seemed like all these things were supposed to happen, that it was meant to be," says Hosten, now 75, from her home just outside Toronto, Canada. "At that point, I realised how much I had to do on my own."

Even if the event made her a global celebrity, Miss World was by no means the culmination of Hosten's career: she would go on to travel the world, meet movie stars and heads of state, obtain several advanced degrees and have a ringside seat for history in the making. She has very much written her own script.

Hosten was born in 1947 in St George's, the picturesque capital of her Caribbean island home, the youngest of five children. It was an idyllic childhood, characterised by morning sea-swims and evenings spent gathered around the radio, which fostered a patriotism that Hosten has carried throughout her life. "When I look back on my childhood, I realise I really was quite blessed," she says. "We didn't know about drugs and we didn't have social media to contend with. We made our own fun."

Her parents were professionals - her father a prominent lawyer, her mother a schoolteacher - but the family were not part of any island elite, she says. "Grenada is a small community, so the structures are not so defined, not like in England," although she describes Grenadians at the time as more class conscious than colour conscious. "Most of us were of mixed blood," she says, and describes her own heritage as including African, Scottish, Flemish and Carib Indian.

The radio was Hosten's main window into a world beyond Grenada, and after leaving school she pursued a career in broadcasting, travelling to London, at 18, to enrol on a BBC training scheme. After nearly two years in the UK, and six months in France, she returned to Grenada a cosmopolitan, bilingual, polished woman of 20 - an ideal candidate to work as a flight attendant for British West Indies Airways.

> **You had to turn around for your backside to be judged. Even back then, it was shocking**

It was in this role that a series of events - "what you might consider coincidences, which I don't think are coincidences, really" - propelled her towards her date with destiny at the Royal Albert Hall. There was a fateful in-flight meeting with the recently crowned Miss Guyana; happening to pick up a newspaper reporting Grenada's plans to send a representative to Miss World; and bumping into an old friend whose mother was the head of Grenada's tourist board. He persuaded Hosten to compete, suggesting Miss World would be no different from the traditional carnival queen contests she had participated in as a teenager. "They were never really about beauty. They were always more about promoting the culture of the island," she says. "Throughout the Caribbean, you were considered 'attractive', rather than 'beautiful'; and that meant that you had a nice smile, that you presented yourself well."

Miss World was very different. "The objectification was exemplified by having to turn around for your backside to be judged," she says. "Even back then, it was shocking, because I never

contest winner'

had to do that in Grenada. And it was shocking to my daughter, who later saw the contest. She was embarrassed for me. She said: 'Oh Mum, I can't imagine that you had to do that!'" Hosten is also a little embarrassed for her younger self, watching the footage back. "It seems so corny. I can't believe that's how I answered questions! It makes you cringe, you know? But that's what it was."

Her win made the front pages around the world, but Hosten was disturbed by the tone of much of the reporting. "The first time I ever saw myself as a minority was when I came to England for Miss World, because the day after I won the headline was: Miss World is Black," she says. "I found it shocking that your colour or race should be a headline … because even if they thought of me as Black, was that the most important thing for them to be highlighting?"

The same articles often included allegations that the contest must have been rigged, since the judging panel included the Grenadian premier, Eric Gairy. Hosten found this risible: "There were three British judges, there was also an African judge, a judge from Denmark, I think there was a judge from India … and all of a sudden the one from Grenada should have made the difference?"

It seemed to her the fuss was a cover for their true objections: "It was really because there were two women of colour [Pearl Jansen, Miss Africa South, placed second], and the fact that I wasn't the standard European type of winner. [In their minds] I could not possibly, naturally, have been able to win. It was hurtful."

Coming face to face with the women's lib protesters was, by comparison, less disconcerting. When crowds singing the protest song We Shall Overcome accosted an official Miss World coach en route to the Royal Albert Hall that day, she remembers some of the contestants on board joined in the singing. "At one level we thought: this is a women's demonstration, and we're women." Hosten says she agreed with much of what the UK women's liberation movement had to say, but they made one great tactical error: "They never reached out to us at any point in time, to explain anything about what they were trying to achieve, or who they were against."

If they had, she would have tried to describe to them her experience – as a woman of colour from one of the smallest nations in the world – and how it might differ from theirs, as white women in the UK. "I was able to represent women that had not had an opportunity like this. And let's be frank: it was a stepping stone for most of us. I never saw myself as a beauty contest winner. I saw it as an opportunity, which I took, to have an experience, and to make some money!"

At that time, the simple fact of a Black woman being proclaimed the world's "most beautiful" sent a powerfully countercultural message. While the "Black is beautiful" movement had been challenging internalised racism among African Americans since the early 1960s, in much of the western world the existence of women with darker skin tones or afro hair textures was ignored by the media and the cosmetics industry. "It was always a job to find something that would really complement my skin," says Hosten. "When I won, no cosmetic companies or hair product companies contacted me to advertise for them, as they had done for previous Miss Worlds."

Hosten realised she was also carrying a banner for long underrepresented women of colour from all over the world: "I think I was one of the first Miss Worlds to be invited to Africa, for instance. I didn't accept the invitation to South Africa, during the height of apartheid, but I did go to Nigeria, and pass through Ghana, and they were wonderful to me, just like a homecoming."

Many beauty queens claim to strive for "world peace", but few have put those words into action as literally as Hosten has. A year after Miss World, she married a Canadian IBM manager named David Craig and set up home with him in rural Ontario, where they raised two children and Hosten did the daily commute to her customer relations job at Air Canada on a snowmobile.

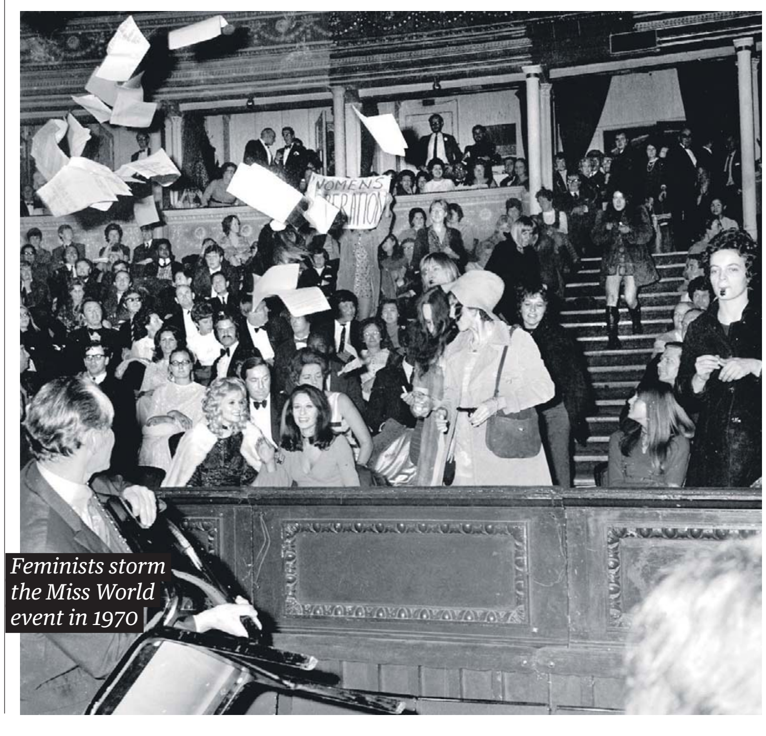


A 1971 stamp in her honour

One day in 1978, however, she received a phone call from Gairy, by then the Grenadian prime minister, inviting her to serve as high commissioner (equivalent to ambassador) to Canada.

Being a woman meant she was expected to be ambassador *and* ambassador's wife, combining her diplomatic duties with the full domestic schedule of a mother of two. "I would have to come home and plan the cocktail parties, organise the childcare. I remember an occasion where [the former Canadian PM] Pierre Trudeau came to my home and read the children a bedtime story … That was quite special." Special, but also a nightmare of parenting logistics: "I was the one that had to arrange for them to actually *go* to bed, and here I was, also the ambassador."

Any notion that this would be a ceremonial role was soon dramatically disproved. "I was returning from a UN meeting in Ecuador when the government fell," she says, referring to the 1979 coup in Grenada led by Maurice Bishop, the leader of the Marxist-Leninist New Jewel Movement (NJM) and an old acquaintance from her London days. "I had to very quickly use whatever skills I had, and get recognition for the new government. I think I was instrumental in that, actually."



Feminists storm the Miss World event in 1970



Being crowned at the contest

Hosten stayed on until 1981, through what would turn out to be one of her nation's most tumultuous chapters. She is critical of the fallen Gairy government, describing it as "verging on authoritarian" and presiding over a long discontented populace: "The people wanted independence [from Britain, which happened in 1974], but they didn't want independence under that government." The NJM government, however, soon descended into something "much worse … total abuse of power, the doing away of all freedoms". In 1983, Bishop was executed by dissident members of his own party, triggering a US invasion. These are events that Hosten is still sorting through in her mind. "There is actually much more to that story that I can tell, that I will sometime write about."

With their children grown up, Hosten and her husband divorced after 28 years of "a fairly good marriage". She went on to marry – and separate – twice more and accept other high-level diplomatic and trade roles before, at 60, retraining as a psychotherapist and counsellor. These days, Hosten is a proud grandmother who enjoys a close relationship with her family. Throughout all her reinventions, she has retained the grace and sincerity that won her that 1970 title.

In 2020, the events of the 1970 Miss World were dramatised in the movie Misbehaviour, with Gugu Mbatha-Raw as Hosten and Keira Knightley as Sally Alexander, the organiser of the women's rights protest. It was during the publicity tour for Misbehaviour, listening to Knightley discuss her choice of acting roles, that Hosten landed on a useful analogy for her own sense of identity: "She's played pirates in the Caribbean, and been in Jane Austen adaptations, and lots of other types of movies, because actresses don't like to be typecast," she says. "Well, *people* don't want to be typecast … I didn't want to be remembered just as a beauty contest winner, because there are so many other sides to us."

This plurality of womanhood is what Hosten hoped – and still hopes – to convey: "I don't know how far [the women's movement] has come in the sense of really including the interests of a broader section of women," she concludes. "But I do think they achieved a great deal and I really have to congratulate them. What, it seems to me, is still missing, is asking: who are we to be limiting the roles of other women?"

PHOTOGRAPHS: JORIAN CHARLTON/THE GUARDIAN; SUTHERLAND HOUSE; BILL ZYGMUNT/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK; GETTY

‘When I’m not here, who will look after my son?’



Ed Davey once governed alongside the Tories. Now he’s leading the Lib Dem opposition and dreaming of a better deal for carers. He talks to **Zoe Williams**



Campaigning with former Lib Dem leader Nick Clegg in 2015

I meet Ed Davey at his house, a sprawling Edwardian semi in his Kingston and Surbiton constituency. In the hands of a banker or, for that matter, a regular politician, it would be full of black and white tiles and plantation blinds, but in the hands of the Daveys it looks like an 80s novel, full of elegant chaos, every surface covered in papers, cellos and vests.

The Liberal Democrat leader, 57, is unusually open and approachable, guileless; I start bombarding him with the kind of questions you’d ask a friend you hadn’t seen in 20 years. Why have you got a high chair when your youngest is nine? How come you’ve got so many cars? Two of the cars are theirs, a little electric one and a mobility vehicle for their 15-year-old son, John, who is disabled; one car is John’s carer’s. She has a toddler, hence the high chair. One is John’s teacher’s – “he’s taught from home. We tried two special schools, but they didn’t work out. When we started home education, he was non-verbal. He’s now verbal. Which is brilliant,” he beams. We head out to the garden, where I congratulate him on the local election results.

They have a good ground game, the Lib Dems, and they’re scrappy: even accounting for the way all parties manage expectations before local elections, they sailed way over their targets. “Our central scenario was about 250 [councillors] in five councils; we ended up with over 400 in 12 councils. So we’re pretty happy,” he says. They made 704 gains in the 2019 local elections, so this is shaping up into a solid recovery after the party’s post-coalition doldrums. “Because the next election is all about getting rid of the Tories …” he begins. Maybe I smirk a bit, because he stops – he’s the last man standing of the Lib Dems who served in the coalition cabinet, so fierce anti-Tory rhetoric is still faintly incongruent. “That is exactly my mission.” Will this party ever enable another Conservative government? “We will not put the Conservatives back into government or do any deal with them. What. So. Ever. I’ve fought them all my life: I fought them in government, I’m fighting them now. They’re beyond the pale, as far as I’m concerned.”

A load of questions shuffle in behind that. What kind of deal would he be seeking with Labour? Is he already in negotiations with Keir Starmer? Does he think he could get proportional representation over the line?

He doesn’t answer any of those, instead giving me this helicopter view: “I’ve been reflecting on past leaders. I joined the party in 1989, I was economics adviser to Paddy [Ashdown], I worked closely with Charles [Kennedy], I had a period as Menzies [Campbell]’s chief of staff, so I’ve seen them close up, and seen them in election campaigns, dealing with this question. There’s a danger that if you focus on after the election, you just get distracted, you spend a load of energy thinking about something that might never happen. My job is to win lots of seats: primarily against the Tories; two against the SNP; one, arguably two, against Labour. I’m going to focus on my job.”

His life in politics started in 1987, when he was 21, a student, and he joined the Tactical Voting group, as he “just wanted the Tories out”. He emphasises that although he’s spent his whole career with the Lib Dems – only two years out of parliament since 1997, when he lost his seat in 2015 – he didn’t get into politics as a career move. While it’s true that, in 1989, a careerist would have joined a party polling at higher than 5%, his life can still look smooth and gilded, from the PPE degree from Oxford to the succession of spokesperson jobs – education and skills, trade and industry, business, foreign affairs, home affairs – in a party that prized nicely spoken young men with common sense. This impression of an effortless life could not be further from the reality.



Joining anti-Brexit protesters in July 2019

He is putting care at the centre of the Lib Dems’ agenda, he says. “It’s the only way to rescue the health service. It’s massive for gender equality … and, linked to that, social justice.” He wants to be plain about his perspective, which is not that of a policy wonk, but that of a man who has lived an extraordinary amount of his life as a carer.

He describes a “relatively humble” background: his father from a mining family, his mother the daughter of domestic servants. Davey was the youngest of three boys, and his dad was doing



'We didn't show we cared enough' … Ed Davey at home in London



With his wife, Emily Gasson, at Buckingham Palace in 2022

PHOTOGRAPHS: DAVID LEVENE/THE GUARDIAN; VICTORIA JONES/PA; WIKTOR SZYMANOWICZ/GETTY; NIKLAS HALLE'N/AFP/GETTY

well, working as a solicitor in Nottingham. When he was four, and his bothers were nine (Charles) and seven (Henry), John Davey died of Hodgkin's disease at the age of 37. "Diagnosed in November, he died in March. I didn't really know him. When you're young, you roll with it. The big thing was seeing my mother's grief, hearing it, knowing something tragic had happened."

His mother, Nina, moved with the boys to a bungalow, and was then diagnosed with breast cancer when Davey was nine. Three years on, she was diagnosed with secondary cancer in her bones. "Henry and I, with help from my maternal grandparents and neighbours, nursed Mum for three years," he says. "The last 18 months she was bedridden, in a lot of pain. We had this morphine - I used to pour it out and give it to her in a cup." He became incredibly close to her: "I'd spend hours lying on the bed, talking to her. I was by her side in Nottingham general hospital when she died. I was in my school uniform, on my way to school."

He tells this story matter-of-factly, but it's full of searingly sad details - how his mother and grandmother bickered in the last few months, because his grandmother used to do all the buttons up when she ironed a shirt, and his mother would struggle to undo them; the carrot and apple juice fasts his mother would try, because conventional medicine was all out of ideas; the ridiculously large meals his grandparents used to make him when he went to live with them after his mother's death.

"And then my grandad died when I was 18," he says. "I was pretty angry about that. It was quite sudden, a heart attack; he couldn't have been that old, 66. I think he died of a broken heart. He'd lost his only child, who he adored. He was a very, very emotional man."

Davey got through all that without any academic missteps. He was at Nottingham high school, in the year above Ed Balls, and he remembers his conscious decision: "The summer after my mum died, in the kitchen by myself, I had loads of work to do. I thought: 'I'm not going to do it.' Previously, I studied to make my mother happy. Because that's what you do as a kid. Are your parents proud of you? It was a real Rubicon moment for me. That's when it could have gone wrong. But Mum had been a massive influence in my life, and I went the right way, rather than the wrong way."

He spent a lot of time with his grandmother: all his university holidays, Christmases, just the two of them, well into his adulthood. "First of all, she was looking after me. Then we were looking after each other. Then she got more frail, after I became an MP. Henry and I became her carers, not in terms of the care I did for my mum or for my son, but looking after her affairs."

When he married Emily Gasson, another prospective parliamentary candidate for the Lib Dems (she stood in four elections, but didn't get a seat; she's now a councillor), it was 2005 and he had to move his grandmother to an expensive care home in Kingston. "I said to Emily: 'We'll have to mortgage the house to pay for my grandmother's care home fees.' Which was quite something to say, because we really couldn't afford it."

> **I didn't trust George Osborne an inch. But we served at Nick Clegg's pleasure**

His son was born in 2007. Caring for John is "full on", he says. "You do the lot. I'm sure lots of professional carers do it with affection, of course they do. But when it's someone you love dearly, your thought process is completely different. My biggest thing with my son is: when I'm not here, who is going to look after him? Sometimes he hits and pinches - you have to get over that. And my wife and I, we worry, when we're not here … you read these awful stories about how people are treated. I'm sure all parents whose kids have special needs will understand. It's the thing that worries me more than anything else in my life."

Gasson, meanwhile, was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 2012. She recovered pretty well - she has remitting MS - then declined again during lockdown.

"Until I became leader, I didn't talk about the care side [of my life]," he says. "Partly because it's private. But I felt, inevitably, people are going to ask me questions about my life. It's easy with my parents; that's a long time ago. It's more difficult with my son, and with Emily's MS, but it is what it is, and it's given me an insight into the reality of millions of people's lives."

He believes in socialised medicine, a completely overhauled system of care to reflect the collective responsibilities we have towards one another. And I have to say, given how central health and care are to his agenda, and how the NHS is as close to an experiment with socialism as we've ever come in this country, I'm surprised he's not more leftwing. He's not even to the left of the Lib Dems, although he mildly disputes his reputation as an "Orange Book" liberal (so called after the Lib Dems' pro-free market 2004 treatise, which he co-authored). "I wish people would read my chapter in the Orange Book! It's about local government." Beveridge was a liberal, he says. But he wouldn't have amounted to a hill of beans without the Labour party, I reply. David Lloyd George was a liberal and he brought in national insurance, Davey says. The Labour party was barely five years old when that happened, I return. I appear to be trying to persuade the leader of the Lib Dems to join a socialist Labour party that doesn't even exist, using a GCSE study guide on the 20th century.

I suppose it's because that period in coalition, the start of the most callous government in living memory, still casts a shadow. Davey says he was fighting the Tories constantly: "I didn't trust them an inch. I didn't trust George Osborne an inch. We didn't tell people how much we were fighting the Tories; that was by design, from Nick [Clegg]. He wanted to show that coalitions work. I argued that we should show the bit of the Liberals that's anti-establishment, that's reformist, that's internationalist. But he was the leader. We served at his pleasure."

He names a few big wins over the Conservatives from those years: the Liberal Democrats successfully locked in the government's offshore wind contracts, so Osborne couldn't rescind them after 2015, as he tried to; they stopped the Tories freezing benefits when inflation was running at 5%. "I believe in our environmental stuff, I believe in our political reform, I believe in our internationalism, in civil liberties, I believe in our support for public services, I believe we're caring; that's who we are. And we weren't showing it enough. We're not going to make that mistake twice."

As I get ready to leave, Davey introduces me to John, who is playing a card memory game with his teacher and carer in the room at the front where he does his schooling. Everyone is encouraging John, very gently, to say "hello", and my name, and he gets overwhelmed for a second and buries his head in his father's shoulder, who soothes him so that he can come out with a triumphant, "Hello, Zoe!" It's a moment of ineffable tenderness, trust and patience, such that you'd probably only witness between two other people a handful of times in your life. I thought I was going to make the whole situation a million times more stressful by bursting into tears, but pulled it back from the brink, thank God, by thinking: it would be funny if, after a lifetime trying to persuade people to vote Labour, I ended up voting Lib Dem.

For the love of Zelda

It is a video game unlike any other. For three decades, The Legend of Zelda has been thrilling fans and smashing records. As its latest incarnation grips gamers afresh, its makers tell **Keza MacDonald** how they hit new heights with Hyrule

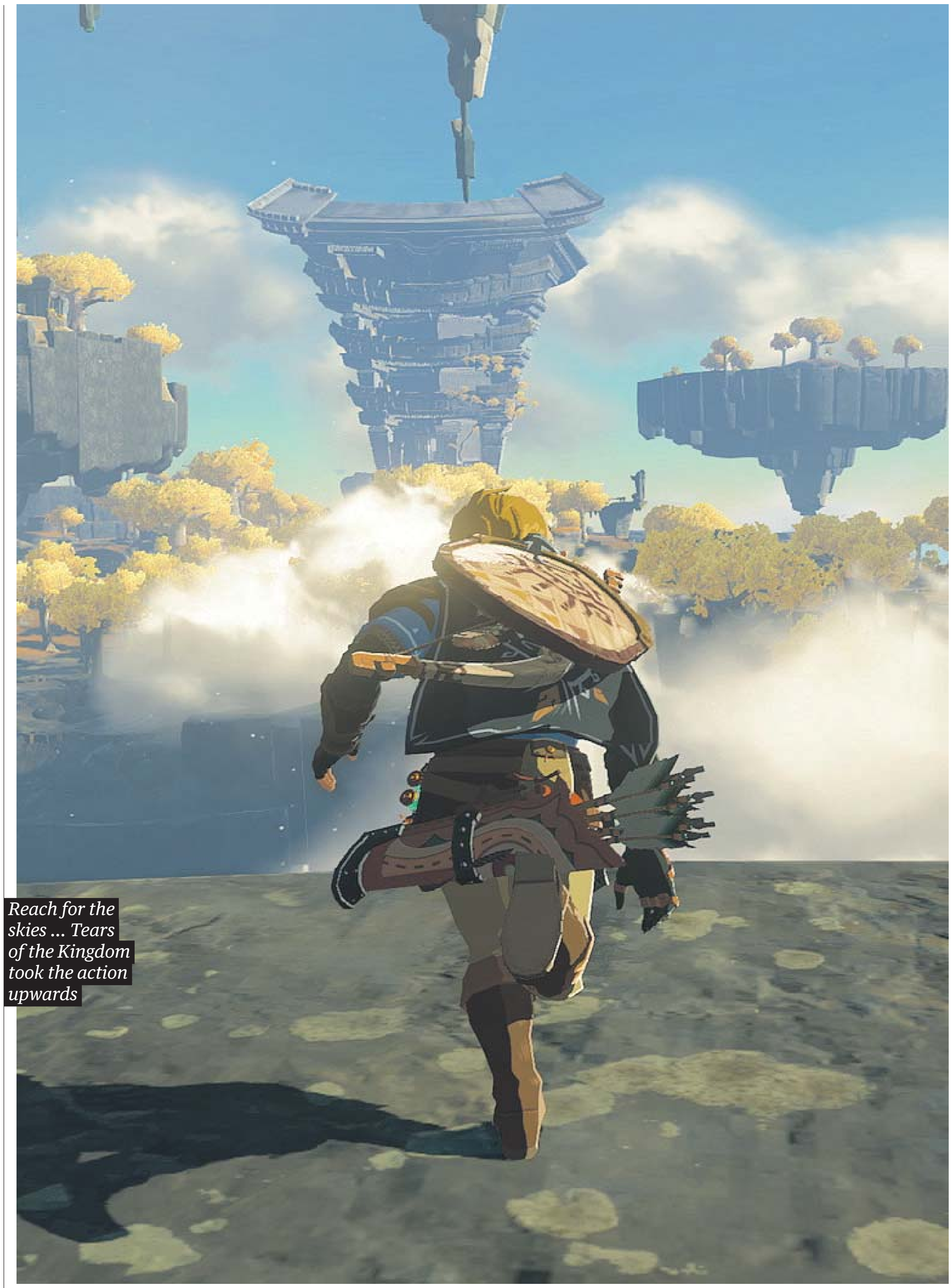
The release of a new Zelda game is always a major event worldwide. Ever since 1986, when famed Japanese game designer Shigeru Miyamoto first attempted to capture in code some of the wonder he experienced exploring the Kyoto countryside as a child, Zelda games have been pushing the boundaries of what's possible in virtual worlds. Look at any best-games-of-all-time list and you'll see Zelda in the Top 10, often more than once.

But 2017's The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild was particularly special. Launching alongside the Nintendo Switch console, which has since sold more than 125m units, it was perhaps the best realisation yet of the promise of boundless freedom and adventure that video games have been dangling in front of players' noses for decades. It got rave reviews and sales hit 30m, many millions of those buyers new to the fantasy world of Hyrule. Pretty much everyone loved it. Soon, indie-pop star St Vincent was confessing to putting 300 hours into it.

So what do you do after you've just released one of the best video games ever? For director Hidemaro Fujibayashi and the rest of Breath's team, the answer was simple: try to make something even better. Remarkably, they now appear to have managed it. The sequel, Tears of the Kingdom, was released on Friday and had critics (including me) displaying an unbecoming lack of restraint. Set in the same world as Breath, it expands the game upwards to gorgeous sky islands, and downwards through gaping chasms to Hyrule's dark and dangerous underworld, letting players move freely between them. The ultimate aim, as it always has been, is to track down Princess Zelda and save the realm from an encroaching evil, but how you get there is up to you. Tears of the Kingdom asks that you approach its puzzles and environments even more creatively, smooshing together self-made weapons and contraptions from parts left lying around. It is a technological and creative marvel.

Fujibayashi tells me that the idea for Tears coalesced, appropriately, through experimental play - the same kind of messing around that Breath's players have been doing in thousands of hours of YouTube videos over the past six years. Almost immediately after Breath's release, the team started tinkering, to see if they could get more out of the world they had created. "There were various objects you could ride around on or move around, such as gears that turned on their own," he explains. "We tried attaching those to a board - and realised you could make a car. Another thing you could do was use four boards to create a tube, then use a remote-control bomb to turn it into a cannon and make objects fly. Boards stuck to gears could create paddles to power a boat. We thought there was a lot of potential just using what was already there."

After a few months of figuring out exactly what he wanted to make, Fujibayashi put together a video showing off the team's ambitions, to present to his bosses at Nintendo. Among them were Miyamoto, now 70 and still a strong presence at the company, along with producer Eiji Aonuma, from whom Fujibayashi took the reins of Zelda in 2011. Aonuma is the most recognisable face of Zelda, director of some of the series' greatest hits, from 1998's stunningly innovative and



Reach for the skies ... Tears of the Kingdom took the action upwards

> **People say it gives them wonderful 'I did it!' moments – like they're the only person in the world who could have cracked it**



'Gah, how do I do this?' ... Eiji Aonuma, left, and Hidemaro Fujibayashi

PHOTOGRAPHS: NINTENDO


Early days … 1992's A Link to the Past

atmospheric Ocarina of Time, to 2003's cartoonish sailing adventure Wind Waker. He also directed my personal favourite: 2000's Majora's Mask, an eerie tale of impending disaster and lost innocence.

Aonuma is an amiable presence, with a laugh full of the playful glee his games often inspire. He has worked on Zelda since the mid-90s – nobody understands the series better. Yet, he admits, at first he wasn't entirely sold on Fujibayashi's ideas. "It was my suggestion to make the next game a sequel," says Aonuma. "I thought there was still a lot we could do with this world. But I can't see so much into the future, so initially I was like, 'Is this really going to work?'"

Fujibayashi's blueprints got the green light regardless and, as work progressed, Aonuma was slowly won over. In Nintendo's Kyoto HQ, the two work on either side of a partition, and Aonuma is given to involuntary yelps when he's enjoying a game. "Depending on how much I voice my excitement, I can gauge whether something's really fun," he says with a laugh. Fujibayashi smiles and remembers his colleague test-driving his new creations: "I'd hear him going, 'Gaaahh, how do I do this? What? I can't – oh wait, I did it!' When those shouts kept coming, I knew this was going to be a good game."

It shouldn't be a surprise that Tears tries something radical. In three decades, Zelda has never shied away from reinventing itself. Like all the best legends, it is reshaped with each fresh incarnation. But some elements endure. Across 20 or so games, there's always an elven hero named Link fighting a great evil. He, Princess Zelda and demon-king Ganondorf appear again and again, in different forms and timelines, in different versions of a kingdom named Hyrule that might be flooded, fractured, war-torn or long abandoned.

The Link of Ocarina of Time and Majora's Mask is a rather tragic figure: a kid sent forward in time to save the world, and robbed of his own childhood in the process. In Wind Waker, he is a boisterous youngster, rendered in bold cartoon lines. In Twilight Princess, he is a teen hero for the emo age, silent and sullen. The stories of all the Zelda games fit together in a branching timeline, but each can also stand alone as a version of the myth.

Breath was a turning point, simply because of its peerless sense of freedom. Before, Zelda games were made up of overworlds and dungeons: you'd explore them in sequence, each dungeon bestowing a new tool that opened up more of the map. The puzzles were locks with specific keys: throw boomerangs at switches, use bombs to blow up cracked walls, pull yourself across chasms with a hookshot. In both Breath and Tears, though, you can go anywhere, following your own sense of adventure. You'll never find yourself unable to explore further because you don't have the right gadget: instead, the limitation is your own imagination, or your own ingenuity.

A Link Between Worlds, the Nintendo 3Ds game from 2013, felt like a bridge between the structure of classic Zelda and the total openness of modern Zelda; playing it now, you can see Aonuma and the team straining against old conventions. But, he says, it was the technological advance of the Nintendo Switch console that finally freed them: "In the past, there always had to be an entrance and an exit." This was down to older consoles' memory limits. "That's why we needed dungeons. But now these things can all be connected. The freedom has been made possible by the evolution of the hardware. Having a seamless experience greatly improves the game design as well."

For all that Zelda has changed, and for all that Tears brings to the table, some things stay the same. As a child, when I first played Zelda: A Link to the Past, it was the only game world I'd ever encountered that felt as rich and full of promise as the fantasy novels I loved – and the games still retain that depth and mystery. They feel like you could live inside them. And they're still games about curiosity, tapping into the human impulse to explore. Every time you solve one of its puzzles, you get a tremendous feeling of accomplishment.

"A lot of the time," says Aonuma, "people tell me Zelda gives them these wonderful 'I did it!' moments – when they solve a puzzle and think they must be the only person in the world who could have cracked it. If we provided too much guidance about how to do things, they wouldn't feel that way. The satisfaction comes from exploring and figuring things out – that's the route to joy. In Tears of the Kingdom, I believe this feeling has become even stronger."

"Zelda," adds Fujibayashi, "allows us to make games based on plenty of ideas. I can always realise whatever it is that I want to achieve. I approach each new idea, each new game, with excitement. Even though I've been working on the Zelda series for a long time, I've never gotten bored."

Sting's Shape of My Heart

'I used to do tarot readings but it got so scary I gave up. I remained fascinated, though. For the song, I liked the imagery of a kind of soldier whose weapons are cards'


Chopin chords … Sting; below, Dominic Miller

PHOTOGRAPHS: VEVO; ALAMY

Sting
Singer, songwriter

The guitarist Dominic Miller and I would get together at my house in Wiltshire every Wednesday. One week, Dom came in with four chords. I said, "I like the sound of that" – and eventually we had the shape of a song. I took it into the garden on headphones and walked around thinking: "What is the story this music is trying to tell?" The chords weren't sexy – they were contemplative. So I was thinking of somebody who uses their brain.

I came up with the idea of a card-player who is also a philosopher. As a kid, I had played five-card stud. Years later, someone taught me tarot and I would do readings for people and see all this dark stuff I was apprehensive about telling them. In the end, it got so scary I gave it up, but I remained fascinated. So for the song, I liked the imagery of a kind of soldier whose weapons are his cards. The hook – "but that's not the shape of my heart" – reflects the fact that a playing card heart doesn't look like a human one.



By that point, I had spent a lot of time in airless studios and I just wanted to come home. So I built a studio in the kitchen. The atmosphere on the record came from that environment – we were all very happy, and the house was reverberating with music. In the video, I'm walking the dog.

I asked the legendary harmonica player Larry Adler if he'd play on it. The guy had recorded Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue and had a piece – Romance for Harmonica – written for him by Vaughan Williams. It was such an honour that he agreed. David Sancious played keyboards and Vinnie Colaiuta drums. We didn't dress it up much.

It's been sampled many times by rap artists: I think the descending chords inspire a contemplative kind of rap. When I hear Craig David or Juice WRLD's versions, I think they've interpreted the song in the same way. In my set now, we do Shape of My Heart and Juice WRLD's version as a mashup. There's even a magician called Shawn Farquhar who plays the song as he shuffles cards. Every time a certain card is mentioned in the lyrics, it miraculously appears at the top of the deck. I'm fascinated by all the places where the song turns up.

Dominic Miller
Guitarist, songwriter

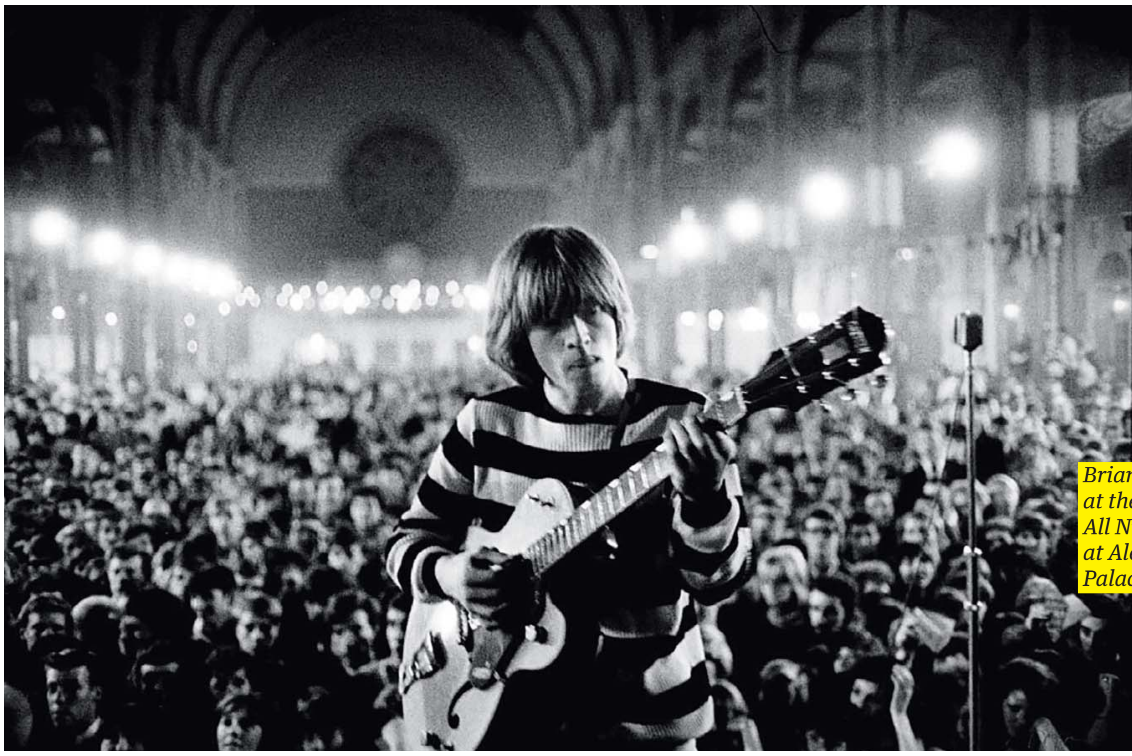
When I auditioned for Sting in 1989, I couldn't get any sound out of my guitar. Technicians were running around, changing amps, switching power supplies. I stood there thinking: "This is really going to shit." After they'd exhausted every possibility, Sting casually walked over and turned the volume up on my instrument. The crew were in hysterics and thinking I'd lost the gig helped me relax. We've played together ever since.

The Shape of My Heart riff wasn't something I intended to present to him. I was just playing around with some Chopin-esque descending piano chords as an exercise, but they were really nice. So, instead of naffly trying to make it sound classical, I came up with a series of notes for the right hand with a John Lennon type of rhythm.

I was sitting by Sting's fireplace playing it. Only the dog was listening, but then Sting said: "What's that, mate?" I told him it was just my silly little riff and he said: "That should be a song." We put a simple beat together on a drum machine and he went out to the garden and came back with a lyric, but I didn't really hear the words at that point. I drove home and didn't think more about it. We had 30-40 ideas for songs. Then later he called and said: "That thing we were working on today sounds really good."

It was the fifth single from the album Ten Summoner's Tales, but people started taking more notice of it after Luc Besson used it in the film Léon. Since then, it's been sampled many, many times – and there are something like 150 covers. The 90bpm tempo and descending chord sequence seem to connect with a certain type of producer. It amuses me that people like Juice WRLD, Nas, Craig David and the Sugababes are actually playing Chopin without realising it.

Interviews by Dave Simpson. On Thursday, Sting will become an Ivors Academy Fellow. His world tour arrives in the UK on 24 June



Brian Jones at the Stones' All Night Rave at Alexandra Palace in 1964

Review The Stones and Brian Jones, BBC Two

The dark side of sex and drugs and rock'n'roll

★★★★☆

Lucy Mangan



'Being a Catholic," says Dawn Molloy, the mother of Brian Jones's fifth child, "I was very inhibited. He kind of got that out of me - not to be ashamed of my body and what I could do. He was very, very sexy. The way he made love was insatiable. He made me feel amazing. He made me feel loved and special."

Nick Broomfield's biography of the Rolling Stone whose drug- and booze-ravaged 26-year-old body was pulled from his swimming pool on 3 July 1969 is at its best when telling his life story through the women who loved him - and whom he, at least temporarily, loved.

After his strait-laced parents kicked the longhaired, jazz-loving, seeming wastrel out of the family home in Cheltenham, Jones gathered no moss. He developed a modus operandi whereby he would seduce a woman, move in with her and her parents, charm the latter, get the former pregnant and then jog on, leaving broken hearts and fatherless children in his wake. Broomfield estimates Jones did this five times in the early 60s.

Linda Lawrence, whom he met when she was 15 and he was 20, recalls the erotic high, but also the comedown. Years after he left her and their son, Julian, she turned up on his doorstep seeking a little money to tide them over.

Inside, Jones and his new squeeze, the 60s It girl and actor Anita Pallenberg, were in the first throes of their affair. Instead of giving Linda money, Jones laughed at her, as did Anita. "When he started hanging with her [Anita], his dark side came out," says Jones's friend Prince Stash Klossowski de Rola, whose name, with its two apparent drug references, seems curiously fitting.

"Anita was putting oil on the flames," says the film director Volker Schlöndorff, who cast Pallenberg in his 1967 film A Degree of Murder and allowed Jones to write its incidental music. They were aroused by spiking others' drinks and fighting with each other," says Schlöndorff.

One photo from the time shows Brian and Anita in matching hairdos and gaunt beauty, he in a Nazi uniform with a swastika armband, like a prototypical Prince Harry. The image seems to sum up the sinister element of the swinging 60s: not so much its liberation as its self-regard, cruelty and dimwit politics.

Jones got his comeuppance, at least. In Cannes for the film premiere, Pallenberg awoke in Jones's hotel room, went down the corridor and was found later in Keith Richards's bed.

By that summer of 1967, Jones was a falling star. True, it had been his love for, and appropriation of, African American blues music that made the Stones special; his retooling of Muddy Waters, Robert Johnson and Howlin' Wolf gave them the edgy sound that, say, the Beatles could never approximate. When the Stones played in the US, appearing on TV shows with Howlin' Wolf, these scrawny, white London herberts were introducing many Americans to the blues for the first time. For that, at least, Jones deserves kudos.

As Broomfield notes, though, the Stones' manager, Andrew Loog Oldham, realised that Mick Jagger and Richards could make the group a hit factory - and that Jones, who did not write songs, was expendable. One of Jones's lovers, the actor Zouzou, tells Broomfield that Jones hated the way the band was evolving away from the blues. "He said: 'Mick and Keith are writing shit and I can't stand it. It's vulgar, awful and out of tune.'"

Another of his lovers, Marianne Faithfull, understood Jones. His lack of self-esteem was worsened by Jagger and Richards's self-confident creativity. He fell back on scotch and coke, downers and LSD, seeking succour in things that he was neither physically nor mentally tough enough to handle.

Apart from the odd flash of musical ingenuity, Jones became a liability, scarcely capable of playing live. When he was fired from the band a few weeks before his death, Jagger recalls, he seemed unsurprised.

Forty years after Jones's death, a heartbreaking note from his dad, Lewis, turned up in the attic of Lawrence's family home. Read poignantly by Lawrence, it forms the denouement to Broomfield's touching film. Lewis Jones regretted how he treated Brian: "I have been a very poor and intolerant father in many ways. You grew up in such a different way from that in which I expected you to. I was quite out of my depth." And, in his short life, so was his son.

What's On

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Rebekah Vardy: Jehovah's Witnesses and Me
10pm, Channel 4



A world away from the glossy drama of the Wagatha Christie trial, Rebekah Vardy tells her difficult story of growing up as a Jehovah's Witness and reveals how the religion failed to support her after she had experienced sexual abuse. She speaks with former members of the faith, the mother of a man who killed himself after being expelled and an ex-member who has gathered thousands of secret documents.
Hollie Richardson

The Greatest Auction
8pm, Channel 4
A rare pinball machine signed by the pinball wizard himself, Elton John, and a fork from Saddam Hussein's palace are just two of the (very kitsch) items our millionaires and private collectors will be battling to get their hands on, egged on by host AJ Odudu. Plus, who will be taking home a vintage "fly-o-plane" fairground attraction? **Ali Catterall**

Forensics: The Real CSI
9pm, BBC Two
Knowing the horrifically low number of convictions in rape cases in the UK makes this first episode of the latest forensics series all the more poignant. A 21-year-old woman has been raped in a derelict house in Birmingham; will the team find enough evidence to catch the perpetrator? **HR**

Colin from Accounts
10pm, BBC Two
TV's most excruciating birthday dinner party is also one of the funniest in this week's episode of the charming Australian romcom. Ashley takes Gordon to her unbearable mother's house for the dreaded occasion, where Darren Gilshenan earns barks of laughter with his turn as Lynelle's creepy partner, Prof Lee. **HR**

Perry Mason
10.05pm, Sky Atlantic
The rebooted period drama, starring Matthew Rhys as lawyer Mason, continues. This week, there are unnerving echoes of the modern US as the justice system conspires against Mason's clients, the Gallardos, who go in front of a judge who appears to have made up his mind already. What can Mason's team conjure up? **Phil Harrison**

Rain Dogs
10.40pm, BBC One
Costello (Daisy May Cooper) has a book deal ("basically Oliver Twist, but with big tits"), but there is still a long way to go until she finally feels her head is safely above water. She needs to take a council house in Somerset, where she attempts to become a debt collector. Look out for a guest appearance by Karl Pilkington. **HR**

BBC One

6.0 **Breakfast** (T) **9.15** Rip Off Britain (T) **10.0** Frontline Fightback (T) **10.45** Defenders UK (T) **11.15** Homes Under the Hammer (T) **12.15** Bargain Hunt (T) (R) **1.0** News (T) **1.30** Regional News and Weather (T) **1.45** Doctors (T) **2.15** Money for Nothing (T) (R) **3.0** Escape to the Country (T) **3.45** The Bidding Room (T) (R) **4.30** The Repair Shop (T) (R) **5.15** Pointless (T) (R) **6.0** News (T) **6.30** Regional News and Weather (T) **7.0** The One Show (T) **7.30** EastEnders (T)

8.0 **Waterloo Road** (T) New series. Kim is rocked by a blast from the past, while a new pupil causes problems.
9.0 **MasterChef** (T) The first challenge of knockout week sees the cooks make dishes they would put in their cookbook. Then they are thrown in at the deep end in a busy restaurant.

10.0 **News** (T)
10.30 **Regional News** (T) Weather
10.40 **Rain Dogs** (T) Costello falls back into bad habits.
11.10 **The Truth About Improving Your Mental Health** (T) (R) Prof Tanya Byron and former footballer Alex Scott uncover science on how to improve mental health and wellbeing.
12.10 **Weather** (T) **12.15** News (T)

BBC Two

6.30 **Bargain Hunt** (T) (R) **7.15** Escape to the Country (T) (R) **8.0** Sign Zone: Coast to Coast Food Festival (T) (R) **8.30** Coastal Defenders (T) (R) **9.0** Nicky Campbell (T) **11.0** News (T) **12.15** Politics Live (T) **1.0** The Super League Show (T) (R) **1.45** Impossible (T) (R) **2.30** Eggheads (T) (R) **3.0** Eat Well for Less? (T) (R) **4.0** Beechgrove Repotted (T) (R) **4.15** Interior Design Masters With Alan Carr (T) (R) **5.15** Flog It! (T) (R) **6.0** House of Games (T) (R) **6.30** Clive Myrie's Italian Road Trip (T) **7.0** Digging for Britain (T) (R)

8.0 **Inside the Factory** (T) (R) Gregg Wallace visits a Denby factory that has been making pottery since 1809.
9.0 **Forensics: The Real CSI** (T) New series. The forensics team must identify and arrest a rapist through information provided by the victim and digital evidence recovered from the crime scene.

10.0 **Colin from Accounts** (T) Ashley takes Gordon to her mother's home for dinner.
10.30 **Newsnight** (T) Weather
11.15 FILM **Moonlight** (Barry Jenkins, 2016) (T) Drama.
1.0 **Sign Zone** Murder in the Pacific (T) (R) **1.45** MasterChef (T) (R) **2.45** A Special School (T) (R) **3.15** This Is BBC Two (T)

ITV1

6.0 **Good Morning Britain** (T) **9.0** Lorraine (T) **10.0** This Morning (T) **12.30** Loose Women (T) **1.30** News and Weather (T) **1.55** Local News and Weather (T) **2.0** Dickinson's Real Deal (T) (R) **3.0** Tenable (T) (R) **4.0** Tipping Point (T) **5.0** The Chase (T) **6.0** Local News and Weather (T) **6.30** News and Weather (T) **7.30** Emmerdale (T)

8.0 **Love Your Garden** (T) Alan Titchmarsh helps overhaul firefighter Rebecca's garden in Northamptonshire.
9.0 **Without Sin** (T) Charles tries to convince Stella that he was set up by a notorious crime family, but she struggles to believe what he tells her as she learns more about his dark past.

10.0 **News** (T) Weather
10.30 **Local News** (T) Weather
10.45 **Jonathan Ross' Must-Watch Films** (T) Recommendations for movies available on ITVX.
11.15 **British Touring Car Championship Highlights** (T)
12.30 **Shop: Ideal World 3.0** Monster Carp (T) (R) **3.50** Unwind With ITV (T) **5.05** Bling (T) (R)

Channel 4

6.05 **Countdown** (T) (R) **6.45** Cheers (T) (R) **7.35** The King of Queens (T) (R) **8.25** Frasier (T) (R) **9.55** Find It, Fix It, Flog It (T) (R) **10.55** Couples Come Dine With Me (T) (R) **11.55** News (T) **12.0** Steph's Packed Lunch (T) **2.10** Countdown (T) **3.0** Sun, Sea and Selling Houses (T) (R) **4.0** A Place in the Sun (T) **5.0** Help! We Bought a Village (T) (R) **6.0** The Simpsons (T) (R) **6.30** Hollyoaks (T) (R) **7.0** News (T)

8.0 **The Greatest Auction** (T) Collectors bid for a pinball machine signed by Elton John and a prototype mid-century chair.
9.0 **Grand Designs: The Streets** (T) New series. Kevin McCloud follows two neighbouring families from Yorkshire as they venture into the world of self-build.

10.0 **Rebekah Vardy: Jehovah's Witnesses and Me** (T)
11.05 **Gogglebox** (T) (R)
1.05 **Taskmaster** (T) (R) **2.0** The Lateish Show With Mo Gilligan (T) (R) **2.55** The Curse (T) (R) (T) (R) **3.50** Couples Come Dine With Me (T) (R) **4.45** Jamie's One-Pan Wonders (T) (R) **5.10** Moneybags (T) (R)

Channel 5

6.0 **Milkshake! 9.15** Jeremy Vine (T) **11.15** Storm Huntley (T) **12.15** Alexis Conran (T) **1.40** News (T) **1.45** Home and Away (T) (R) **2.15** FILM The Disappearance of Cari Farver (Danishka Esterhazy, 2022) (T) **4.0** Bargain-Loving Brits in the Sun (T) (R) **5.0** News (T) **6.0** Eggheads (T) (R) **7.0** Michael Portillo's Pyrenees Adventure (T) (R)

8.0 **The Yorkshire Vet** (T) Peter has his hands full when two wild owls are brought into the practice.
9.0 **The Big Steam Adventure** (T) As John, Peter and Paul embark on the last leg of their journey, they travel from Whitby via Beamish and the River Tyne, before reaching the Scottish border.

10.0 **The Lie: Murder in Suburbia** (T) (R) A 2004 killing.
11.55 **Born to Kill?** (T) (R)
1.0 **Teleshopping** (T) **3.0** Good Girls' Guide to Kinky Sex (T) (R) **3.45** GPs: Behind Closed Doors (T) (R) **4.30** Wildlife SOS (T) (R) **4.55** House Doctor (T) (R) **5.20** Milkshake! Monkey's Amazing Adventures (T) (R)

BBC Four

7.0 **Railways: The Making of a Nation** (T) (R) Liz McIvor examines the impact of railways on Britain. **7.30** Fred Dibnah's Age of Steam (T) (R) Early steam experiments for road use.

8.0 **As Time Goes By** (T) (R) Jean is invited to stay at her sister-in-law's home.
8.30 **Whatever Happened to the Likely Lads?** (T) (R) Terry finds it difficult to accept that times have changed.
9.0 **Dam Busters Declassified** (T) (R) Actor Martin Shaw takes to the skies to retrace the 1943 raid by 617 Squadron.

10.0 **Storyville: In the Name of the Father** (T) Documentary tracing a scandal in an Orthodox Hasidic community after the death of its leader.
11.30 **Britain and the Sea** (T) (R)
12.30 **Railways: The Making of a Nation** (T) (R) **1.0** Age of Steam (T) (R) **1.30** Dam Busters Declassified (T) (R) **2.30** Britain and the Sea (T)

Other channels

BBC Three
7.0pm Top Gear **8.05** Meet the Khans: Big in Bolton **8.35** Meet the Khans: Big in Bolton **9.0** The Apprentice Australia **10.10** The Young Offenders **10.40** The Young Offenders **11.10** I Kissed a Boy **12.0** I Kissed a Boy **12.50** Glow Up: Britain's Next Make-Up Star **1.50** The Young Offenders **2.20** The Young Offenders **2.50** Meet the Khans: Big in Bolton **3.20** Meet the Khans: Big in Bolton **3.45** Zen Motoring

Dave
6.0am Teleshopping **7.10** Driving Wars **8.0** Border Force: America's Gatekeepers **9.0** Cops on the Rock **10.0** Storage Hunters UK **10.30** Storage Hunters UK **11.0** Rick Stein's Road to Mexico **12.0** Special Ops: Crime Squad UK **1.0** Border Force: America's Gatekeepers **2.0** Top Gear **3.0** Top Gear **4.0** Secrets of the Supercars **5.0** Expedition With Steve Backshall **6.0** Taskmaster **7.0** Richard Osman's House of Games **7.40** Richard Osman's House of Games **8.20** Room 101 **9.0** Have I Got a Bit More News for You **10.0** QI XL **11.0** Meet the Richardsons **11.40** Would I Lie to You? The Unseen Bits **12.20** QI XL **1.20** Dave Gorman: Modern Life Is Goodish **2.30** Richard Osman's House of Games **3.0** Whose Line Is It Anyway? USA **3.25** Whose Line Is It Anyway? USA **4.0** Teleshopping

E4
6.0am Hollyoaks **6.30** Hollyoaks **7.0** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA **9.0** The Neighborhood **10.0** The Big Bang Theory **11.0** Modern Family **12.0** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **1.0** The Big Bang Theory **3.0** Modern Family **3.30** Modern Family **4.0** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **4.30** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **5.0** The Big Bang Theory **5.30** The Big Bang Theory **6.0** The Big Bang Theory **6.30** The Big Bang Theory **7.0** Hollyoaks **7.30** The Big Bang Theory **8.0** Below Deck Sailing Yacht **9.0** The Big Celebrity Detox **10.0** The Inbetweeners **10.35** The Inbetweeners **11.05** Naked Attraction **12.10** Naked Attraction **1.15** The Big Celebrity Detox **2.20** Gogglebox **3.15** Below Deck Sailing Yacht **4.05** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA **4.55** The Neighborhood **5.20** The Neighborhood

Film4
11.0am FILM Legend of the Lost (1957) **1.15** FILM Born Free (1966) **3.05** FILM The Wrong Box (1966) **5.15** FILM Man of the West (1958) **7.15** FILM Daddy's Home (2015) **9.0** FILM Jungleland (2019) **10.50** FILM Watchmen (2009) **2.05** FILM Mid90s (2018)

ITV2
6.0am World's Funniest Videos **6.35** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **7.0** Dress to Impress **8.0** One Tree Hill **9.0** The OC **10.0** Secret Crush **11.0** Dress to Impress **12.0** Celebrity Catchphrase **1.0** Family Fortunes **2.0** Chuck **3.05** One Tree Hill **4.0** Dawson's Creek **5.0** Celebrity Dinner Date **6.0** Celebrity Catchphrase **7.0** Superstore **8.0** Bob's Burgers **8.30** Bob's Burgers **9.0** Hell's Kitchen **10.0** Plebs **10.30** Plebs **11.05** Family Guy **11.30** Family Guy **12.0** American Dad! **12.30** American Dad! **12.55** Bob's Burgers **1.25** Bob's Burgers **1.55** Superstore **2.25** Superstore **2.45** Unwind With ITV **3.0** Teleshopping

Sky Max
6.0am Stargate SG-1 **8.0** DC's Legends of Tomorrow **9.0** Quantum Leap **10.0** The Flash **11.0** NCIS: New Orleans **1.0** Hawaii Five-0 **2.0** MacGyver **3.0** Quantum Leap **4.0** DC's Legends of Tomorrow **5.0** The Flash **6.0** Stargate SG-1 **8.0** The Flash **9.0** Fantasy Island **10.0** Flintoff: Lord of the Fries **11.0** S.W.A.T **12.0** The Force: North East **1.0** Road Wars **2.0** Brit Cops: Frontline Crime UK **3.0** Hawaii Five-0 **4.0** MacGyver **5.0** Highway Patrol **5.30** Highway Patrol

Sky Arts
6.0am Beethoven: The Complete Symphonies **6.45** Australian Ballet: The Sleeping Beauty **9.0** Tales of the Unexpected **9.30** Tales of the Unexpected **10.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **11.0** Discovering: Maureen O'Hara **12.0** The Sixties **1.0** Tales of the Unexpected **2.0** The Art of Architecture **3.0** The Directors **4.0** Discovering: Edward G Robinson **5.0** Tales of the Unexpected **6.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **7.0** The Art of the Garden **8.0** The Artist's Garden: American Impressionism **9.0** The Grapes of Wrath: The Ghost of Modern America **10.0** Margaret Atwood: A Word After a Word After a Word Is Power **12.0** FILM Dean Martin: King of Cool (2021) **2.15** Tony Bennett & Lady Gaga: Cheek to Cheek Live! **3.30** Music Icons: Soul Crooners **4.0** Skinner & Mina's Literary Road Trip: Pope & Swift **5.0** Auction **5.30** Auction

Sky Atlantic
6.0am Urban Secrets **7.55** The Wire **10.05** True Blood **12.15** Game of Thrones **1.20** Ray Donovan **3.30** The Wire **5.45** True Blood **7.55** Game of Thrones **9.0** Gangs of London **10.05** Perry Mason **11.10** Dreamland **11.40** Treme **12.50** The Night Of **2.0** The L Word: Generation Q **3.0** Game of Thrones **4.05** Urban Secrets


Watchmen, Film4

Radio

Radio 3
6.30am Breakfast **9.0** Essential Classics **12.0** Composer of the Week: Tchaikovsky (2/5) **1.0** Lunchtime Concert. L'Apothéose in a programme of baroque music for the Spanish court, including works by Tommaso Giordani and Stamitz. **2.0** Afternoon Concert. The Ulster Orchestra perform Beethoven's Violin Concerto with Francesca Dego. Plus, Stravinsky's Octet for Winds from the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra. **5.0** In Tune **7.0** Classical Mixtape **7.30** In Concert. Edward Gardner conducts the London Philharmonic Orchestra and sopranos Emma Bell and Elsa Dreisig in Brett Dean's In spe contra spem and Mahler's Symphony No 5. **10.0** Free Thinking. A look at Zimbabwean writing. **10.45** The Essay: De Waal's Itinerant Pots. The connection between ceramics and stories. (R) **11.0** Night Tracks **12.30** Through the Night

Radio 4
6.0am Today **8.31** (LW) Yesterday in Parliament **9.0** The Long View **9.30** Metamorphosis: How Insects Transformed Our World (R) **9.45** (LW) Daily Service **9.45** (FM) Book of the Week: Into the Night (2/5) **10.0** Woman's Hour **11.0** Supersenses. Technology that could help create all-sensing superhumans. (5/5) **11.30** Sound Towns. The story of Warp Records. (2/4) **12.0** News **12.01** (LW) Shipping Forecast **12.04** Call You and Yours **1.0** The World at One **1.45** Frontlines of Journalism. How journalists deal with sources and spin. (7/10) **2.0** The Archers (R) **2.15** Downstream. Drama, by Nick Warburton. **3.0** The Kitchen Cabinet (R) **3.30** Costing the Earth. The effect of the climate crisis on bacteria and fungi. **4.0** The Hidden Masters of the Universe **4.30** Great Lives. Jon Ronson on singer Terry Hall. (7/9) **5.0** PM **5.54** (LW) Shipping Forecast **6.0** News **6.30** Wosson Cornwall (4/4) **7.0** The Archers **7.15** Front Row **8.0** Who Gets In? Affirmative Action on Trial. A court case challenging the admissions process at Harvard. (3/3) **8.40** In Touch **9.0** All in the Mind (4/10) **9.30** The Long View (R) **10.0** The World Tonight **10.45** Book at Bedtime: The Making of Another Major Motion Picture Masterpiece (2/10) **11.0** The Confessional (R) **11.30** Today in Parliament **12.0** News **12.30** Book of the Week (R) **12.48** Shipping Forecast **1.0** As World Service **5.20** Shipping Forecast **5.30** News **5.43** Prayer for the Day **5.45** Farming Today **5.58** Tweet of the Day

Radio 4 Extra
6.0am Peeler (6/6) **6.30** Dr Finlay: The Further Adventures of a Black Bag (3/6) **7.0** Hello World: How to Be Human in the Age of the Machine (2/5) **7.15** Young Victoria (7/10) **7.30** North By Northamptonshire (4/6) **8.0** The Goon Show (18/26) **8.30** Flywheel, Shyster and Flywheel (2/6) **9.0** The Motion Show (6/6) **9.30** Big Town All Stars (3/4) **10.0** Parson Harding's Daughter (1/3) **11.0** Peeler (6/6) **11.30** Dr Finlay: The Further Adventures of a Black Bag (3/6) **12.0** Hello World (2/5) **12.15** Young Victoria (7/10) **12.30** North By Northamptonshire (4/6) **1.0** The Goon Show (18/26) **1.30** Flywheel, Shyster and Flywheel (2/6) **2.0** The Motion Show (6/6) **2.30** Big Town All Stars (3/4) **3.0** Parson Harding's Daughter (1/3) **4.0** Peeler (6/6) **4.30** Dr Finlay (3/6) **5.0** Hello World (2/5) **5.15** Young Victoria (7/10) **5.30** North By Northamptonshire (4/6) **6.0** The Goon Show (18/26) **6.30** Flywheel, Shyster and Flywheel (2/6) **7.0** The Motion Show (6/6) **7.30** Big Town All Stars (3/4) **8.0** TED Radio Hour (35/48) **8.50** Inheritance Tracks **9.0** Mastertapes (4/10) **9.30** A Gathering Light (2/5) **9.45** The Shadow Over Innsmouth (7/15) **10.0** Wosson Cornwall (3/4) **10.30** The Jason Byrne Show (5/6) **11.0** The (Almost) Accidental Adventures of Bell and Todd (6/6) **11.15** Paperback Hell (3/6) **11.30** ElvenQuest (5/6) **12.0** Parson Harding's Daughter (1/3) **1.0** Peeler (6/6) **1.30** Dr Finlay (3/6) **2.0** Hello World (2/5) **2.15** Young Victoria (7/10) **2.30** North By Northamptonshire (4/6) **3.0** The Goon Show (18/26) **3.30** Flywheel, Shyster and Flywheel (2/6) **4.0** The Motion Show (6/6) **4.30** Big Town All Stars (3/4) **5.0** Parson Harding's Daughter (2/3)

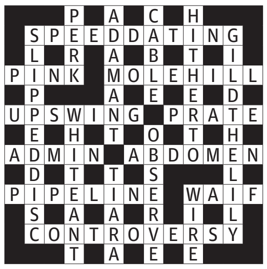
Puzzles

Yesterday's solutions

Wordsearch

G	N	M	L	E	V	O	N	E
W	O	V	L	I	A	O	R	C
I	B	S	A	E	T	A	H	I
C	O	D	M	A	L	T	R	T
I	D	N	R	H	R	B	E	O
N	Y	Y	O	O	C	L	O	N
O	A	S	N	R	Z	T	O	N
S	E	H	U	Z	S	W	O	R
E	I	N	O	I	S	E	A	N
E	G	N	E	L	U	D	O	N
M	S	T	N	O	U	G	A	T

Solution no 16,543



Sudoku no 6,063

8	2	9	3	5	7	6	4	1
3	1	4	9	6	8	5	7	2
6	7	5	1	2	4	9	3	8
1	4	6	5	3	2	8	9	7
5	3	7	4	8	9	2	1	6
9	8	2	7	1	6	4	5	3
4	6	3	2	9	1	7	8	5
7	5	8	6	4	3	1	2	9
2	9	1	8	7	5	3	6	4

Word wheel

NEGLECTED

Suguru

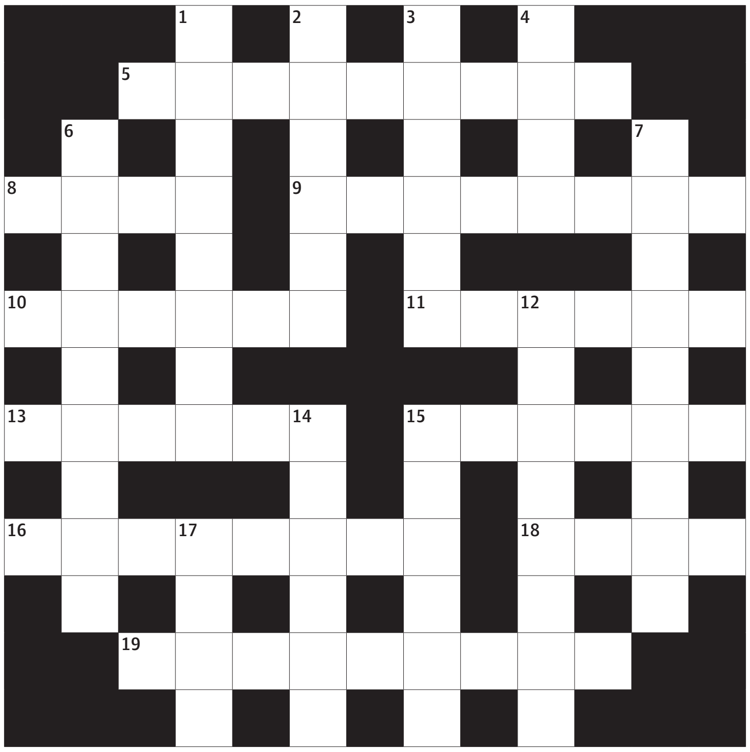
3	2	4	3	1	2
1	5	1	2	4	3
4	3	4	3	1	2
1	2	1	2	4	3
4	3	4	3	1	2
1	2	1	2	4	5

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Quick crossword no 16,544

Across
5 Painter of The Night Watch (9)
8 Circle of light around the moon (4)
9 Irksome (8)
10 Complain of (6)
11 Strong man raised by apes (6)
13 Colourless blood fluid (6)
15 Chatterbox (6)
16 W - snug tent (anag) (8)
18 A horny male? (4)
19 Player's offence in court? (4,5)

Down
1 Toxic - spiteful (8)
2 Get hold of (6)
3 It's attractive! (6)
4 Ill at ease (4)
6 Boozed-up yobbo (5,4)
7 All things considered (2,7)
12 Urban areas of the US suffering industrial decline (4,4)
14 Savvy (6)
15 Affable (6)
17 Milligan, Sellers, Secombe or Bentine? (4)



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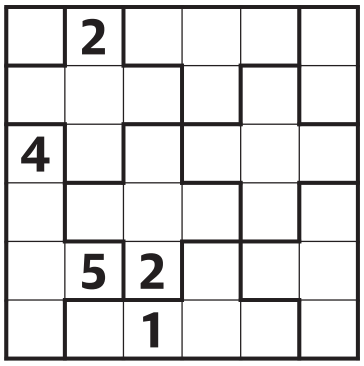
Sudoku no 6,064

Medium. Fill the grid so that each row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9. Printable version at theguardian.com/sudoku

					1		9	2
		9	4	5	8			
2		5	1	4				9
							2	
7		8	9	6				3
		1	6	8	4			
					3		5	6

Suguru

Fill the grid so that each square in an outlined block contains a digit. A block of two squares contains the digits 1 and 2, a block of three squares contains the digits 1, 2 and 3, and so on. No same digit appears in neighbouring squares, not even diagonally.



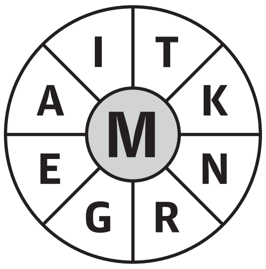
Wordsearch

Can you find 15 words associated with Top Gear in the grid? Words can run forwards, backwards, vertically or diagonally, but always in a straight, unbroken line.

L	C	Y	W	E	I	V	E	R
C	L	A	R	K	S	O	N	A
K	O	L	R	T	E	D	L	C
C	A	I	U	S	H	E	H	E
A	I	N	D	U	A	G	R	S
G	T	R	M	U	N	S	A	R
S	I	O	C	I	T	T	G	U
E	U	T	V	U	L	S	N	N
R	M	I	S	O	I	E	A	W
E	R	O	T	O	M	T	H	A
D	D	E	N	G	I	N	E	Y

Word wheel

Find as many words as possible using the letters in the wheel. Each must use the central letter and at least two others. Letters may be used only once. You may not use plurals, foreign words or proper nouns. There is at least one nine-letter word to be found. TARGET: Excellent-77. Good-64. Average-47.



Trivia corner

Who is the youngest main-credit artist to win a Grammy for album of the year?
a. Taylor Swift
b. Billie Eilish
c. Lorde
d. Daya
Answer top right



TODAY'S TRIVIA CORNER ANSWER **BILLIE EILISH**